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# "They Know Too Much Already:" Black Education in Post-Emancipation Era Columbus, GA, 1866-1876

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# “THEY KNOW TOO MUCH ALREADY:” BLACK EDUCATION IN POST-EMANCIPATION ERA COLUMBUS, GA, 1866-1876

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Despite local histories that have been published on the history of Columbus, Georgia, and its school system, very little has been written about Columbus's freedmen schools created after the U.S. Civil War. As a result, a comprehensive history of Columbus's freedmen does not exist, and those written are fragmented. The focus of this study is to document the beginnings of Columbus's freedmen school efforts in the post-emancipation era, through those African Americans' own historical voices and experiences. Though an analysis of archived unpublished letters, local and religious newspapers, census data, government documents, and meeting minutes, this study recovers the authentic perspective of Columbus's freedmen as they embarked upon securing an education as well as exploring the limits of their freedom. This study is part of both the historiography of black education and of African Americans in the immediate post-Civil War Era.

INDEX WORDS: Georgia, Columbus, freedmen, post-emancipation, Reconstruction

TO CHERYL

I dedicate this to you because more than anyone else, you believed in my goals, abilities, and desires. You also did more than anyone else to help me realize them.

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This thesis was written during a series of transitions in my life. Many people do not know that attending Columbus State University was my attempt at taking my life back. Far more than embarking on a second career, in essence, this has been my second life. Through it all, the lessons I learned coupled with the friends I made has changed me forever. Being as brief as possible, I would like to recollect on at least a few of the people in my academic community that made this thesis possible and have become part of my second life.

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# INTRODUCTION

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The focus of this study is the genesis of the efforts in Columbus, Georgia by African Americans to create a stable educational apparatus for themselves after the end of the American Civil War. These newly emancipated blacks in Columbus were aided for a brief period by northern women and men who journeyed from New England to the war-ravaged South. There was a plethora of these missionary groups sponsored by various freedmen's aid societies and churches, for the purpose of establishing schools and self-improvement groups that would assist African Americans in making a comfortable transition from slavery to citizenship.[1] It is the contention of this study that African Americans in Columbus were not naïve to the local challenges that opposed them but envisioned education, no matter the cost, as the only sure determinant of their advancement. For when northern missionary groups arrived in Columbus, black people, both previously free and newly freed, had already created small networks, organizations, and societies that were effective in raising the funds to finance education as well as producing literate African Americans. Columbus citizens were well aware of the desire of African Americans to achieve literacy as well as some of the steps the Black community had already taken to educate themselves. For this reason, a white Methodist minister in Columbus said, "We are willing…that the niggers should be taught to read, and that is enough. They know too much already."[2]

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[1] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), 3-4. In her book, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, Jones states that there were several groups of teachers sponsored by churches/missionary organizations and freedmen societies that traveled from the northern United States to the southern United states to teach in all-Black schools.

[2] Harrison Leland to Ednah Dow Cheney, Columbus, Georgia, 8 February1868, in "Letters From Pupils," *Freedmen's Record* (The Freedmen's Journal), March 1, 1868.

This study on the beginnings of black education in Columbus during the post-emancipation era is part of at least two historiographies. Undoubtedly, this Columbus study is a part of the studies on African American education since it tells the story of efforts in Columbus by blacks to create schools for black children where none existed. It is, if nothing else, a study of black education. But because this study expands beyond the creation of schools and shows the additional challenges black people in Columbus faced, I also consider this work to be an emancipation study, and therefore part of the greater historiography of African Americans in the Reconstruction era.

The historiography of African Americans in the Reconstruction era is as diverse as the range of experiences of African Americans in this time period. Because information on African Americans in the nineteenth century can be difficult to locate, the work reflected in my study as well as the historiography of African Americans in the Civil War era has been extracted from numerous historical sources, some even nontraditional. Much of the information from the studies compiled here are drawn from black newspapers, primary documents, diaries, census data (when available), court and city records, photographs, and military documents. Nevertheless, the importance of such a historiography is priceless in the quest to understand the history of a people yet learning the full story of their contributions to the United States since their arrival. Because of the multitude of works in this historiography, I have selected but a few to feature here that like this study, provides a lens to view the African American experience during the Civil War era.

Efforts to accurately write the history of African Americans in the Civil War era have been defined by historians' interpretation of the contributions of African Americans. These various interpretations have changed over time, juxtaposed against the time period in which the respective historians lived. The first academic historical literature concerning African American

in the Civil War era and their contributions was written by Columbia University historian William A. Dunning. Dunning and his famed "Dunning School" historians depicted African American as savage brutes, dependent children, uncivilized, criminal, and unlearned. The focus of these historians' narrative of emancipation was not the destruction of American bondage but the expensive cost of burned southern property and spilled white blood. In their view, Black male suffrage was a blunder of catastrophic Reconstruction governments that enfranchised black men incapable of intellectual thought and likely to endanger white females. With no appreciation nor any genuine insight on the African American's struggle towards freedom, the Dunning School would contour the view of African Americans in the Civil War and Reconstruction Era from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1930s and beyond. Dunning historians undoubtedly were products of their time period. Their racial bias reflected the consensus of white academia in the early nineteenth century and erected another barrier that African Americans would have to penetrate as they fought for national acceptance in a country slow to recognize their historical accomplishments and one that denied them social equality. William Dunning's *Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction and Related Topics* (1897) and *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865–1877* (1907) set the tone for how traditional Reconstruction histories were written.[3] Following suit, members of the Dunning School tethered study after study to the chain of academic studies that buttressed blinkered perspectives on Reconstruction. James W. Garner's *Reconstruction in Mississippi* (1901), John W. Burgess's *Reconstruction and the Constitution* (1902), Walter L. Fleming's *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (1905), Thomas S. Staples's *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* (1923), and Claude Bowers's, *The Tragic Era:*

[3] William Archibald Dunning, *Essays On the Civil War and Reconstruction and Related Topics* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1910); *Reconstruction, Political And Economic, 1865-1877* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1907).

*The Revolution After Lincoln* (1929) built a wall of studies too tall for conflicting works to hurdle.[4]

It was not until the 1930s that scholarly writing challenged the traditionalist view of the Civil War era. As the New Negro era saw the grandchildren of former enslaved people attend college and the Jim Crow age intensified, African Americans continued to emphatically protest social injustices from military discrimination to racial violence. One African American scholar was not taking the traditionalist depiction and misrepresentation of blacks lying down. In 1935, the first black Harvard graduate, W.E.B. Du Bois, authored a study fittingly titled *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880.* Du Bois' massive volume is a fiery, combative voice against the grain of the writings of William Archibald Dunning and others from the notorious Dunning School, who placed the blame of the failures of Reconstruction on incapable and corrupt black leaders. Du Bois took the Dunning School to task, refuting their scholarship and racially biased work, and created a groundbreaking study that set a precedent for how the impact of blacks the Civil War and Reconstruction era should be academically addressed.

Although it would be decades before multiple works emerged along this framework—hallmarked by a celebration of emancipation, commemoration of African American soldiers, and the meaning of black suffrage and election to office—the modern view of African Americans in the Civil War era was beginning to assert itself. Unlike the traditional view, modern assessments seek to understand the complexity of the African American experience in the era. With a methodology that centralizes its efforts on finding the black voice, modern scholars have

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[4] James Wilford Garner, *Reconstruction In Mississippi* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901); John William Burgess, *Reconstruction And the Constitution, 1866-1876* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1902); Walter Lynwood Fleming, *Civil War And Reconstruction In Alabama* (New York: P. Smith, 1905); Thomas Starling Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* (New York: Columbia University, 1923); Claude Gernade Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1920).

searched black newspapers, diaries, letters, and enslaved people's accounts. This approach takes readers into refugee camps, onto battlefields, and beyond the first breaths taken as freedmen, more authentically capturing the lives of African Americans in the Civil War era.

W.E. B. Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction* was a revisionist work. In seventeen chapters, Du Bois meticulously fulfilled his threefold aim: Apply Marxist economics to black labor and provide an accurate depiction of southern blacks in the antebellum period while providing an alternative to racist Reconstruction historiography. Du Bois fervently believed that slavery was the cause of the Civil War and that blacks had "primarily" economic reasons for helping to win the war.[5] This was directly against the traditionalist view that opposed any such idea of black impacts on the bloody sectional crisis. According to Daniel Levering Lewis, to further exacerbate the climate, black scholars were "unheard or dismissed by the white academy."[6] The tandem of the academic silencing of blacks, racist interpretations of Reconstruction—courtesy of the Dunning School—and the aggressive economic determinism of Progressive historians like Charles and Mary Beard fueled Du Bois's poignant written response.[7]

"It would be another fifty years or so before white scholars would catch up to Du Bois." Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877,* like DuBois' work, was a revisionist study but with different intentions.[8] Whereas DuBois wrote to vindicate blacks from assault by Dunning's school, Foner's 1988 study aimed primarily at changing the narrative of

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[5] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), viii.

[6] David Levering Lewis, introduction to *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880,* by W.E.B. DuBois (New York: The Free Press, 1992), viii.

[7] Lewis, introduction to *Black Reconstruction,* ix.

[8] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

Reconstruction while challenging the traditionalist interpretation. Foner's study puts African Americans front and center. Being a complete study, Foner addresses several themes and covers much ground. Everyone seems to have a place in Foner's work. He discusses the carpetbaggers, the scalawags, the Republican unionists, Radical Republicans, Democrats, emancipated blacks, free blacks (born free), poor whites, white planters, and secessionists. Foner differs from Dunning in that he does not blame blacks for the failings of Reconstruction, nor does he attempt to connect blacks with corruption. Foner credits Reconstruction with forming a basis for the twentieth century black community and enhancing the black church as well as the black family.. Foner's work is a foundational guide to understanding Reconstruction's national impacts as well as the contributions of African Americans to the Civil War era blatantly overlooked by traditionalist studies. As such, this thesis fits squarely in the tradition of Du Bois and Foner, centralizing the experience and achievements of Black people in Columbus, Georgia.

As much as Foner provides insight into the history of the plight of emancipation itself, Amy Murrell Taylor gives us stories of the personal and individual lived experiences of Black people pressing towards emancipation. Amy Murrell Taylor's book, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps*, tells the story of five hundred thousand Black people fleeing to Union Army lines to escape slavery and grasp freedom. Taylor's 2018 study provides the most comprehensive examination of the history of enslaved peoples' refugee camps and their effects on the ongoing war and the plight of freedmen. Historically, Taylor positions the refugees in a "long emancipation."[9] Using military records, newspapers, and missionary reports, Taylor ventures into an "act of recovery," reconstructing the way that refugee camps looked and were experienced by the formerly enslaved people who lived in them. Taylor's thesis,

[9] Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 9.

in so many words, is that enslaved people made freedom tangible by building the refugee camp settlements. Taylor focuses on the uncertainty of emancipation. For this reason, she purposely does not write this as a linear story, attributing this to the fact that "emancipation itself was not a linear story, but instead a fitful journey of forward movements and backward retreats." This study draws on Taylor's insights about the uncertainty of emancipation; the Black people in Taylor's study were much like the freedmen in Columbus, Georgia. Survival was their number one objective but ensuring a future for their children drove them to endure hardship.

The African American experience in the wake of the Civil War did not solely belong to black males, as scholars have spent the last few decades exploring. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After The Civil War,* is Tera Hunter's study on the plight of free black women after emancipation, examining how they were breaking away from the social norms imposed upon them by the South. Emancipation provided new hope to these women who now looked to connect with long-lost family members, rekindle romantic relationships with distant lovers, and earn a living to provide for their growing families. [10] Emancipation created opportunities for black laboring women to organize, including an attempt by Atlanta washerwomen to unionize and go on strike in 1881.[11] Beyond union organizing, black women stretched their earnings, saved their money, bought property and ventured into entrepreneurship as seamstresses and lunch cart owners. Like the Black women in Hunter's study, Black people in Columbus tried to make the most of their post-emancipation lives. Not only did they desire a better life for themselves, they envisioned a better life for their children, thus fueling their pursuits for achieve an education for them.

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[10] Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After The Civil War,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 11-12.

[11] Ibid, 88.

In addition to putting African American women front and center in the story of Reconstruction, modern scholarship has shown violence to be a constitutive element of the era. In 1984 George C. Rable authored what he described as "the first comprehensive examination of the use of violence by conservative southerners to subvert Federal Reconstruction policies, overthrown Republican state governments, restore Democratic power, and re-establish white racial hegemony."[12] Rable's *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* pays particular attention to the acts of violence committed by southern whites in the Reconstruction period. Rable identifies the targets of white violence as "Union men, blacks, and Republicans of both races."[13] Rable contends that, "By the time the federal government retreated from its reconstruction of the south, former Confederates had achieved through political terrorism what they had been unable to win with their armies—freedom to order their own society and particularly race relations as they saw fit."[14] Rable frames white southern paramilitary violence as a counterrevolutionary movement aimed at removing a Republican controlled government and erasing all gains blacks made through emancipation and suffrage. In Rable's study, readers encounter African Americans who have been savagely beaten and others that were burned alive. It is not the mentioning of these occurrences but the reporting of the frequency of these events that makes Rable's study a must-read in the historiography of African Americans in the Civil War era.

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[12] This quote by Rable is taken from the front flap of the book. George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984).

[13] George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 1.

[14] Ibid, 1.

The experiences of African Americans in Columbus, Georgia during Reconstruction bear out these diverse veins in the scholarship. First is the similarities in their post-emancipation experience to freedmen nationally. This historiography shows that struggles of political inequality in Columbus, Georgia was a national problem for freedmen. Next, antiblack violence was not just used to terrorizes freedmen in Columbus and surrounding areas, but antiblack violence was on threat to freedmen across the U.S. after emancipation. Finally, freedmen in Columbus, as well as nationally, had to made a daily adjustment to the realities of emancipation. For each day both in Columbus and in the U.S., freedmen encountered a myriad of challenges that changed constantly with the enactment of new national, state, and local statues. While this study does focus on events in Reconstruction it also intersects with the more specific scholarship on education in the Reconstruction era. Within the scholarship on education during Reconstruction there has been a shift in the focus, moving from a focus on white teachers to a focus on African Americans' roles and experiences in schools during Reconstruction. This study emphasizes that Black people in Columbus did not wait until they had secured assistance from Columbus's White citizens to create schools. When missionary teachers arrived in Columbus, they found that Blacks in Columbus had already raised money, appointed teachers, and used church buildings to house their early schools.

Not until almost the second half of the century did freedmen's schools and northern teachers collectively begin to be written about extensively. In *The Northern Teacher in the South,* (1941), Henry L. Swint contended that the South feared that the education of blacks was an effort to remake the "South in the image of New England" and convert "the freedmen into Republican voters." He stated further that, "The Southerner did not fear the education of the Negro—he feared Negro education in the hands of the typical 'Yankee teacher,' under the program of

education advanced by the Radical legislatures."[15] Characterizing missionary teachers as primarily from New England and fanatical abolitionists, Swint discounted the ability of missionary teachers, determining them to be incompetent frauds.

William Preston Vaughn authored what he called in 1974 "an in-depth study" of African American education in southern public schools and colleges during Reconstruction. In *Schools For All: The Blacks & Public Education in the South, 1865-1877.* Vaughn highlighted both the wins and losses in the battle for the creation of African American education, the establishment of integration, and the emergence of legal protection for black schools. Vaughn's study sought to shed light on a time period that he felt had been only discussed in part, failing to tell of racially integrated attempts to create black public education. Vaughn, unlike Swint, argued that white missionary teachers (sponsored by the American Missionary Association and the American Freedman's Union Commission) possessed racially progressive attitudes, believing that black children were equal to white children in ability. This belief, not necessarily a Republican Party view, encouraged the cause of integrated schools although at no time did freedmen's schools have more than a small single-digit enrollment.

Shortly after the appearance on Vaugh's book, in 1976, Robert C. Morris attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of this educational experiment in *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870.* Morris did not deny the existence of "idealism and lofty goals" in the northern teachers but suggested, contrasting with Vaughn's interpretation, that their train of thought was "tempered by pragmatism and an awareness of the need for sectional accommodation."[16]

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[15] Henry L. Swint as quoted in Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), x.
[16] Ibid.

Two writings that contributed favorable views of education during this historical period happened to both be published in 1980: Ronald Butchart's *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction* and Jacqueline Jones's *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks*. Butchart states that his book "explores antagonistic views about the purposes of black schooling" among white educators and blacks, while also focusing "on northern White objectives and actions."[17] Butchart's revisionist study focuses on the ideologies and deeds of these missionary groups. His book is more of a history of the various forms of freedmen's aid than a study of the African Americans themselves. In this way Butchart and Jacqueline Jones' books are alike. *Soldiers of Light and Love* is a touch more sympathetic than Butchart to the challenges the missionary teachers faced. Reminiscent of a tribute, Jones displays the northern teachers as reform-minded sojourners, mostly female, that self-embodied an evangelical, abolitionist cause. Her study focuses on Georgia and often depicts the (white female) teachers as fighting both racism and male opposition. Jones', more than other studies, highlights the training and skill set of the missionary teachers.

Whereas Jones' study celebrated missionary, nonblack freedmen teachers, James D. Anderson's study focuses more so on the efforts of Black communities to provide education for their children. In 1988, in *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935,* James D. Anderson forged a new path in the scholarship by arguing that Black Americans played a much larger role in their own education that previously documented in academic studies, Anderson, unlike some of the previous studies in this historiography, is critical both of northern missionary teachers and of northern philanthropic organizations that funded some freedmen school projects. Anderson

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[17] Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (West Port, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), xiii.

feels that these organizations deliberately attempted to make blacks subordinate to whites by encouraging and funding vocational training over liberal arts institutions.

In a more comprehensive view of black education after emancipation, Butchart authored the 2010 study, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876.* Unlike earlier work, Butchart argues here that Reconstruction teachers were more diverse than previously recognized, with one third being African American. According to Butchart, another historical inaccuracy is the idea that most missionary teachers came from New England when in fact, the region did not contribute more than one-fifth of the numbers of teachers. Butchart adds to his list of misconceptions about missionary teachers the abolitionist myth. It has been commonly believed missionary teachers from the North were abolitionists, but Butchart disproves this.

Unlike Burchart that cast a wide net, Hilary Green provides takes a case study approach. Hilary Green's *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890*, written in 2016, addresses the methods used by black populations in Richmond, Virginia, and Mobile, Alabama, to create, develop, and sustain schools after the Civil War. Green's book differs from others in the historiography because she takes the time to introduce readers to early black education activists—a valuable contribution to the black education historiography. She documents how the combination of unity and community activism in two different geographic areas, garnered achieved considerable gains after the exodus of the Freedmen's Bureau.

The best historical study on Columbus, Georgia is by far, Virginia E. Causey's *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues: A History of Columbus, Georgia.*[18] It is Columbus's first

[18] Virginia E. Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, & Blues: A History of Columbus, Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019).

comprehensive and *inclusive* history. Before Causey's book, most of the written histories of Columbus were authored locally and written with a local voice rather than an un-biased scholarly voice. Also largely absent in most histories of Columbus are a variety of African American voices. Nancy Telfair's 1929 study of Columbus is a prime example. Telfair's *A History of Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1928,* is a one-hundred-year study of Columbus, reminiscent of the Dunning School's Reconstruction histories.[19] Telfair depicts emancipated Black people in Columbus as "lazy darkies" who "had been given their 'freedom' and were drunk with the sound of the word."[20] Telfair also suggests that military occupation by Black male troops led to an apparent demise of Columbus. She says, "Some of the troops left here to have charge of the city following its capitulation were negroes, whose new importance and freedom only aided in a more complete ruin and degradation of the city."[21] Telfair's study discloses immense details about slavery in Columbus and therefore capable of adding great value to any study of antebellum Columbus. But her derogatory mischaracterization of enslaved and free Black people spoils the treasures of her research.[22]

Etta Blanchard Worsley's *Columbus on the Chattahoochee* (1951) and John Lupold's *Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1978* (1978), are written in a different fashion from Telfair's study, providing histories of Columbus that pay homage to landmarks and city staples, while providing the story of their origin.[23] Lupold's study is more thorough and written from an adept historical

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[19] Nancy Telfair, *A History of Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1928* (Columbus, GA: Historical Publishing, 1929).

[20] Telfair, *A History of Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1928,* 155.

[21] Ibid., 151.

[22] Ibid., 114.

perspective, providing a structured history of Columbus that succeeds in displaying change and continuity over time. Causey's book, which definitely sticks out as the most academic study of the group, also offers perspectives not available in the other studies. Causey's study provides insight on both the triumphs and challenges of the Black community in the post-emancipation era. Causey highlights the creation of thriving communities and institutions. She mentions personalities like Horace King the famed bridge builder and William Spencer, the educator, as well as includes the genesis of several Black churches, organizations and neighborhoods. Causey also does not neglect reporting that freedmen struggled to find adequate food and shelter, that mass incarceration was a tactic used to stifle freedmen already battling with unemployment, and the Reconstruction did not aid in creating Black government representation. Causey's study by far contains the most information about freedmen schools, providing dates and names of white Columbus citizens who played a part in city-funded freedmen school efforts.

While Lupold's study is not in the fashion of the Dunning School, both his study and the previous studies of Columbus lack an authentic black voice in the post-emanciapation experience of freedmen in Columbus. The intention of this study is to build on the foundation of research on Black education in Columbus provided by Virginia Causey's study, and offer a history of the movement by Black Americans in Columbus, Georgia, to create schools for their children after emancipation. This study in also an effort to enlighten readers on the opposition Black Americans met to these efforts as well as to their existence in the years 1865-1878. To do this, I have searched local, national, and religious newspapers, as well as mined select archived sources. In order to gain insight into the day-to-day perils of the teachers who began educating black children in Columbus, it was necessary to capture the voice of the teachers themselves.

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[23] Etta Blanchard Worsley, *Columbus on The Chattahoochee* (Columbus, GA: Columbus Office Supply, 1951); John S. Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1978* (Columbus: Columbus Sesquicentennial, 1978).

When I looked for records of any organization that sent teachers to the Columbus area, I encountered the records of the New England Freedmen's Aids Society. The New England Freedmen's Aid Society records contain a collection of correspondence between various educational officials and personnel that are featured in the study. The collection consists of correspondence logs, financial ledgers, student work, and abundant letters from teachers. Of all the teacher's letters the most revealing were those from Caroline Alfred, the principal of Columbus's Claflin School. Although Alfred intended her letters to be employee correspondence, they provide a lens with which to view Columbus, during Reconstruction. These letters, which span from 1873 to 1876, contain more than a record of lessons taught, pupil's attendance, and success of vocational pursuits. These letters, some written in haste, unveil the hardships of a freedmen's school in the same geographic location where students were formerly enslaved. Alfred's passion for educating African Americans, and for rendering a quality education to a community that valued it, are evident in her letters. In other letters, she was fearful of the city of Columbus's desire to obtain the school and be in control of black education in the region. Alfred's letters reveal fear of a local offshoot of the Ku Klux Klan, the Black Horses, headquartered in Chattahoochee County, who threatened the editor of the *Columbus Ledger* and the mayor of Columbus.[24] The letters also uncover the threat and dangers of physical harms and the attempts on the teachers' lives, the relentlessness of the teachers to endure turmoil, and then the decision of some teachers not to return to the horror they had come to know in the South.

Alfred's letters also contribute a non-southern, lucid description of the plight of emancipated black Americans. Alfred discussed the mass hysteria of Columbus's white citizens over the impending 1875 Civil Rights Bill and the outright intolerance of whites towards black national

[24] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Cheney, 3 January 1875, Box 1, Folder 12, Loose Papers, 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f12#2..

citizenship.[25] Alfred related witnessing the disdain of Columbus's white leaders for African Americans aspiring to vote in city-wide elections. Despondently, she spoke of the extreme poverty of blacks in the 1870s, and equally lamented their treatment by southern whites. Alfred was wary that blacks could not thrive in the South without the assistance of supportive whites dedicated to the transition of blacks into society. Alfred was much like many missionary teachers who came to the South. She had a paternalistic view of her role in freedmen education. Although her letters are filled with compliments about the astuteness and determination of her Black students, she believed that they could not survive without her. Although much can be learned from various Columbus newspaper articles, property records, maps, and local histories, the letters of Caroline Alfred provide an exposé of the early years of the Claflin School in Columbus.

Newspapers such as the *Freedmen's Record* and the *Christian Recorder* also disclose the unique perspectives of educators, churches, and freedmen on the frontlines of the efforts to create freedmen schools. But no newspapers were as revealing as Columbus's local newspapers, which published the brash, uncensored opinions of Columbus's white citizens who were unwilling to providing a liberal arts education for black Americans, opposed northern missionary assistance, and disdained the very idea of black children learning under the roof of a newly constructed school building.

As Alfred's letters and numerous other historical sources document, violence and white resistance hung over post-Civil War Columbus, forming the backdrop to the freed people's quest

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[25] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Dow Cheney, 31 May 1874, Box 1 Folder 8, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f08#12.

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for citizenship and educational rights. In this, Columbus was not unique. As scholars have documented, violence was the conduit used to usher the post-Civil War South back to the old order of black oppression by southern whites. The Confederate surrender to end the Civil War was followed by the U.S. Congress's adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment, which dismantled chattel slavery and thus splintered the foundation of the South. Soon southern legislators enacted Black Codes in an attempt to keep slavery although it was no longer legal. Irate white citizens resorted to terrorism as a mechanism to frighten the humans they once owned. Columbus was a thermometer for the temperature of the nation in the 1860s. State politics were as hot as any summer in Georgia, reflecting national contention as tempers flared and blood boiled over recent statutes that had come into effect.

It was against this backdrop that black Americans in Columbus fought to create freedmen schools after emancipation. This study will address the deadly struggle to create black schools in Columbus, the impact of literacy on blacks in Columbus, their social mobility, and the forming of civic organizations, as well as the hostility of race relations in Columbus after emancipation. It is this study's aim to allow Columbus's freedmen to speak for themselves. This study allows Black voices to speak about their struggle to exist and survive in during the Reconstruction Era both nationally and locally in Columbus. As much as the source material would allow, the freedmen are directly quoted, and their plight is unveiled unfiltered. Additionally, the beginning of every chapter has a quote from freedmen (not always in Columbus) in effort to speak in context to the time period and events in the chapter. These upcoming chapters, titled from a quote from an African American in the text, will offer a scholarly history of black Americans in Columbus, that has not been previously presented, in hopes of taking the story of the genesis of black education in Columbus out of uncertainty and obscurity.

# CHAPTER 1
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# "TAKING US FROM UNDER THE YOKE OF BONDAGE"

In January 1865, it was the best of times and the worst of times. The most egregious conflict of the age seemed to have reached its culminating point and perhaps could be nearing its end. General William T. Sherman and his tide of sixty thousand had consummated his March to the Sea, only symbolically expurgating slavery and its remnants from a once-propitious portion of the cotton-filled south. Northern newspapers wrote with anticipatory hope that Ulysses Grant's Union Army would deliver the debilitating blow, take Richmond, and smash General Robert E Lee's forces in Virginia and bring the war to a conclusion.[66] The defeat of Jefferson Davis' South would ultimately usher in the conclusive demolition of slavery in the *United* States and begin the process of repairing the tattered fabric of the nation's government in the controversial era known as Reconstruction. White Americans would now have to decide if they were ready and willing to build a unified and interracial republic while the smoke was still rising from the ashes in Georgia.

"Where do we go at the fork in the road," was the impending question haunting the minds of the soon-to-be freedmen living in the war-ravaged Confederate territories.[26] A Union Army win would all but guarantee that the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, permanently freeing over

[26] Instead of the using the term "African American" to refer to people of African descent living in America by force, I have often use the term "black." The terms "Negro," "colored," and "Afro-American" are all outdated. The term "African American" was first used by Jesse Jackson, Sr. and although it has been heavily used in government, the public sector, and in academia, I find it an inaccurate term to describe people of African descent who were denied citizenship, human rights, and protection under the law and who, ironically, by 1865 could not utter a word from an African derived language. If this group of people to which I do belong can be called anything, it is undoubtedly, "black." I try as much as possible to use the term black before emancipation and reserve the term African American for use when identifying freedmen. There are portions of this thesis where "black" will be used interchangeably with "African American" but again, I have reserved that for after emancipation. Although birth should denote one's citizenship, clearly the U.S. government did not apply that rule of thumb to black people.

three million enslaved black people in the ten Confederate states.[27] The remaining 450,000 enslaved living in border states, the 275,000 in Union-occupied Tennessee, and the tens of thousands in parts of Virginia and Louisiana would have to wait and be pleasantly surprised in December 1865 for the 13th Amendment.[28] The looming specter of emancipation, although greatly welcomed by enslaved black people, brought in its entourage several other spirits that would manifest as realities to be discerned and debated. For the first time in their lives, formerly enslaved black people could choose their own destiny from a myriad of blurry options. Geography would greatly impact their decision making. Would freedmen venture north, fleeing the once captive south and permanently escape the horrors of their former masters, the limits of the shackles, and the sorrows of the plantation? Would they instead remain on the soil that they knew and till the course ground they learned to plow as enslaved children? Maybe emigration was the answer and perhaps they would try their luck outside the United States and join the passenger list of a ship heading to the African country, Liberia? Whatsoever the outcome, it was a surety that emancipation would change the lives of freedmen forever and as each day passed, the time to make a decision was speedily approaching.

Such was the case in Columbus, Georgia. Known regionally as a booming trading center on the banks of the Chattahoochee River, filled with mills and warehouses, Columbus had taken a

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[27] "The Emancipation Proclamation." National Archives accessed May 23, 2019, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation. The National Archives website informs readers on the origin of "Proclamation 95." It reads, "The document was bound with other proclamations in a large volume preserved for many years by the Department of State. When it was prepared for binding, it was reinforced with strips along the center folds and then mounted on a still larger sheet of heavy paper. Written in red ink on the upper right-hand corner of this large sheet is the number of the Proclamation, 95, given to it by the Department of State long after it was signed."

[28] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1867*, Updated ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 46. Foner says there were 450,000 enslaved blacks in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. He also gives the figures I included for Tennessee, Virginia, and Louisiana. In addition, Foner uses the term "slaves" to refer to enslaved blacks. I chose to consistently not use that term in this study. Instead I have used the phrase "enslaved blacks" or "enslaved people."

stiff blow from Union forces and was on the rebound. The infamous "Last Battle of the Civil War" occurred on Easter Sunday, April 16, 1865, on the patch of land connecting Columbus, and Gerard (now Phenix City), Alabama. The battle occurred after Lee's April 9 surrender at Appomattox Courthouse.[29] After a crushing Union victory, twenty-eight-year-old Major General James H. Wilson gave Colonel Edward F. Winslow command of the city and orders to "destroy everything within reach that could be made useful for further continuance of the Rebellion."[30] The Naval Yard, foundries, and textile mills were destroyed by fire and Columbus found itself not only with loss of life, but loss of the thriving industries that garnered its economic reputation.

With the war ending, Columbus faced an even bigger problem than rebuilding. The city had to await the newly emancipated black population's imminent decision of what would be their plan of action in post-war and post-Emancipation Columbus. As a result of emancipation, Columbus, the Confederate South, and U.S. border states like Kentucky and Missouri, were without their former enslaved labor force to drive their agricultural production. Securing a labor force in ailing Columbus would be crucial to the recovery of the Chattahoochee Valley economy, still reeling from the destruction of the foundries and mills. But black people, no longer under the mandate of whips and shackles, had expectations of their newfound freedom and understood that the absence of slavery alone was not enough. Black people desired more than freedom, but also equality and opportunity.

Columbus city leaders knew little of what black people desired outside of their stereotype-driven assumptions because they never inquired of the black community's leaders what the

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[29] Located in Appomattox, Virginia.

[30] John Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia 1828-1978* (Columbus: Columbus, GA: Columbus Sesquicentennial, Inc., 1978), 38-43. John Lupold recounts what historians of the U.S. South tend to refer to as the "Last Battle of the Civil War," in great detail. Lupold names streets and landmarks familiar with Chattahoochee Valley residents.

masses may want. Elsewhere, there was a trend of governments meeting with black leaders, normally clergy, in efforts to learn of their respective populations' plans after Emancipation. Abraham Lincoln was the first sitting U.S. president to meet with a group of black leaders. Lincoln was under immense pressure on what to do with the United States' black population. Many northerners opposed slavery because they feared it would continue to encourage black migration to the North. Southerners were fiery in opposition to the idea of black emancipation because of the possibility of blacks having equal citizenship to whites. Lincoln was more of a Unionist than an abolitionist. So, to combat the combination of the anti-emancipation and anti-slavery sentiments, Lincoln entertained the idea of colonizing black people on another continent.[31] Preceding the Emancipation Proclamation, on August 14, 1862, Lincoln met with an invited delegation of black male leaders from the District of Columbia at the White House. Lincoln's aim was to convince black leaders that once free, black people would perhaps fare better in their own colony outside of the United States. Lincoln asserted in his remarks to the delegation that not only had the issue of slavery caused the Civil War, but the absence of black

[31] James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality, Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), 155; Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization After Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2011); "Abraham Lincoln and Colonization." Essential Civil War Curriculum, Phillip W. Magness, accessed May 10, 2019, https://www.essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com/assets/files/pdf/ECWC%20TOPIC%20Colonization%20Essay%20Revised%201.pdf. During Abraham Lincoln's tenure in office, he seemed to be fixated on the idea of relocating blacks in a colony outside of the United States. In James McPherson's *Struggle for Equality,* he gives an account of an incident in 1862 where President Lincoln signs a contract with Bernard Kock to relocate approximately 500 former enslaved blacks to Ile A'Vache (Cow Island), a small island off the southern coast of Haiti. Kock promised to provide jobs and housing blacks in what was supposed to be a paradise. After securing his payment, Kock did not deliver. Blacks with no housing and no jobs died of starvation and Smallpox. President Lincoln finally sent a naval ship to rescue the survivors and bring the back to the US in February 1864. Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page reveals President Lincoln's June 1863 plot of attempting to relocate freed blacks to British Hondurus, modern-day Belieze in their book *Colonization After Emancipation.* Magness addresses President Lincoln's colonization history in a separate article titled, "Abraham Lincoln and Colonization."

people would have prevented the conflict that ignited the war. Lincoln also affirmed that white Americans had suffered from the presence of blacks in the country:

> We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word we suffer on each side. If this is admitted, it affords a reason at least why we should be separated… See our present condition—the country engaged in war! Our white men cutting one another's throats, none knowing how far it will extend; and then consider what we know to be the truth. But for your race among us there could not be war, although many men engaged on either side do not care for you one way or the other. Nevertheless, I repeat, without the institution of Slavery and the colored race as a basis, the war could not have an existence. It is better for us both, therefore, to be separated.[72]

By 1862, Congress had allocated a total of $600,000 to aid in the transportation overseas of blacks. Several locations in both South America and the Caribbean were targeted for the colony.[32] But Lincoln's idea was rejected by black people and publicly ridiculed. Formerly enslaved, abolitionist Frederick Douglass, was the most popular black person in America and considered by many to be the foremost leader of black people in the United States. Known for his fiery tone and his staunch, although eloquent words, Douglass was an anti-emigrationist and fervidly opposed black colonization attempts by the U.S. government as well as black people's desire to emigrate to a territory outside the United States. Douglass contended that the United States belonged to blacks just as much as it belonged to whites. Upon catching wind of the president's remarks to the black delegation, Douglass became livid and provided an incensed rebuttal to Lincoln's proposal in the September 1862 edition of his *Douglass Monthly:*

> The President of the United States seems to possess an ever-increasing passion for making himself appear silly and ridiculous, if nothing worse. In this address Mr. Lincoln assumes the language and arguments of an itinerant Colonization lecturer, showing all his inconsistencies, his pride of race and blood, his contempt for Negroes and his canting hypocrisy. …Mr. Lincoln takes care in urging his colonization scheme to furnish a

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[32] Magness, "Abraham Lincoln and Colonization." 13.

> weapon to all the ignorant and base, who need only the countenance of men in authority to commit all kinds of violence and outrage upon the colored people of the country. Taking advantage of his position and of the prevailing prejudice against them he affirms that their presence in the country is the real first cause of the war, and logically enough, if the premises were sound, assumes the necessity of their removal…A horse thief pleading that the existence of the horse is the apology for his theft or a highway man contending that the money in the traveler's pocket is the sole first cause of his robbery are about as much entitled to respect as is the President's reasoning at this point. No, Mr. President, it is not the innocent horse that makes the horse thief, not the traveler's purse that makes the highway robber, and it is not the presence of the Negro that causes this foul and unnatural war, but the cruel and brutal cupidity of those who wish to possess horses, money and Negroes by means of theft, robbery, and rebellion.[33]

Another meeting of this sort occurred January 12, 1865, in Savannah, Georgia. On a Thursday night at 8 pm, Major General—William T. Sherman and Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, met with twenty black church leaders in what would become known as the colloquy.[34] Stanton hoped the colloquy meeting would give them insight into the expectations the thousands of soon-to-be freedmen.[35] The colloquy vividly displayed that black people fully understood the opportunities that emancipation might bring and that they had prepared themselves, (at least in their mindset) to partake of the new life slavery's abolition would bring. Not only were freedmen conscious of the value of real estate, but furthermore, they knew the possession of freedom alone did not ensure them success. They understood that black people would also need land and capital, protection under the law, and education.

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[33] "Douglass' Monthly, September 1862, Vol. V, No. III," Smithsonian, Frederick Douglass, accessed May 11, 2019, https://transcription.si.edu/project/13220.

[34] "Negroes of Savannah," New York Daily Tribune, [13 Feb. 1865], Consolidated Correspondence File, series 225, Central Records, Quartermaster General, Record Group 92, National Archives, as cited in "Newspaper Account of a Meeting between Black Religious Leaders and Union Military Authorities," Freedmen & Southern Society Project, Accessed May 11, 2019, http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/savmtg.htm. This information was gathered from the minutes of a meeting between Union Army Major General William T. Sherman and the United States Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton who met with a group of black clergymen from Savannah at the Sherman's headquarters in Savannah. The minutes from this meeting were recorded in the New York *Daily Tribune*.

[35] Several authors and internet sources refer to this meeting as the "Colloquy" meeting.

This group of elite black men, mostly senior pastors of Baptist and Methodist churches, ranged in age from twenty-six to seventy-two, and embodied the characteristics of the free black population before the Civil War.[36] Several of these men not only were literate but had formal educations to couple with years of ministerial experience. Most of them had purchased their freedom (others were either born free or free by manumission) and now were among Savannah's most prominent freedmen. Garrison Frazier, leading the group in ministry experience with his thirty-five years and possessing an impressive vocabulary, was selected as the group's spokesman. When asked to, "State what you understand by Slavery and the freedom that was to be given by the President's proclamation," Frazier responded, "Slavery is, receiving by irresistible power the work of another man, and not by his consent. The freedom, as I understand it, promised by the proclamation, is taking us from under the yoke of bondage, and placing us where we could reap the fruit of our own labor, take care of ourselves and assist the Government in maintaining our freedom." Frazier was also asked to "State in what manner you think you can take care of yourselves, and how can you best assist the Government in maintaining your freedom." In a confident and distinguished fashion, Frazier said, "The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our own labor–that is, by the labor of the women and children and old men; and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare. And to assist the Government, the young men should enlist in the service of the Government and serve in such manner as they may be wanted."[37] As the barrage of questions continued, Frazier assured Sherman and Stanton that freedmen corporately felt that it would be safer to live in their own communities as opposed to living with whites, and that they were more than intellectually capable as a race of people to abide by the laws of the United States.

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[36] New York *Daily Tribune*, Freedmen & Southern Society Project.
[37] Ibid.

Conversations like this between government leaders and Black community leaders were either non-existent or went undocumented in Columbus. White citizens in Columbus had a hard time embracing the new free status of Black people seeing only the confiscation of their agricultural labor force. In 1860, Columbus had a white population of 5,764, an enslaved population of 3,265, and 100 freedmen. Outside the city limits resided 3,794 more whites, 4,656 enslaved Black people, and 65 freedmen.[38] The monetary value of enslaved people collectively in Columbus was $4, 203, 350.[39] John H. Martin lists auction prices in Confederate currency from 1865 where he has listed, "A negro boy 21 years of age, $3,950; negro girl of 18, $3,700.[40] According to Nancy Telfair, there were at least three *well-known* establishments in Columbus where enslaved people were purchased and sold: (1) S.B. Hatcher and Allen C. McGehee (on Broadway next to the northwest corner of Twelfth Street), (2) The A.K. Ayer Auction House (between Tenth and Eleventh Streets), and another unnamed (located at the end of the Dillingham Street Bridge), that as late as 1898 still bore a sign reading, "Negroes Bought, Sold, and Hired Here .[41] It was Colonel Allen McGehee, Richard Dickerson of Richmond, Virginia, and Benjamin Davis of Charleston, South Carolina that formed a slavery company and purchased the ship, "Wanderer," to import enslaved people.[42]

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[38] Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia 1828-1978*, 27.

[39] Martin, *Columbus, Geo., From Its Selection as a "Trading Town" in 1827 To Its Partial Destruction by Wilson's Raid, in 1865* (Columbus, GA: Thos. Gilbert, Book Printer and Binder, 1874), 119.

[40] Ibid., 174.

[41] Telfair, *A History of Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1928*, 112.

[42] Ibid., 113.

Formerly living in slave quarters on Columbus area plantations, freedmen now lived in huts or make-shift shelters called shanties. Only a few skilled freedmen were hired by city businesses, and fewer were used to transport cotton from the mills. With the absence of money, adequate housing was off limit to freedmen as well as access to a variety of food. Impoverished freedmen scarcely dressed their tin plates with cornbread made in a cast iron skillet and sweet potatoes left in the fields after a planter's harvest. At times, hungry freedmen resorted to stealing hogs and food stuff from white people in the early morning hours. The result was freedmen being shot by whites defending their property. Some freedmen were found dead from starvation.[43] With no employment, no property in possession, and unyielding white city leaders slow to create any type of program to transition freedmen into Columbus society, they were living the emancipation nightmare. Newspaper journalists blamed freedmen for crimes of all types, using fear politics to encourage their imprisonment. Soon unemployed freedmen found themselves arrested, charged with violating vagrancy laws, and placed on work gangs.[44]

The Columbus *Daily Sun* reported in November 20, 1865 that:

> Preparations have now been completed to have a chain-gang of the idle negroes found in Columbus. All colored people, who have no visible means of support, are to have a ball and chain attached to them and set to work at levelling the fortifications around the city, the city to feed them the while. It is the determination of both the civil and military authorities that no idlers, who can only exist by pilfering and robbery, will be allowed to

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[43] "Dead Negro Found," *Columbus Daily Sun*, November 7, 1865, page 3, Vol. XI., Issue 59; online index and digital image, Genealogy Bank (http://www.genealogybank.com) accessed 19 June 2019, Newspaper Archives, 1690-2010; "Negro Shot," *Columbus Daily Sun*, December 8, 1865, page 3, Vol. XI., Issue 86; online index and digital image, Genealogy Bank (http://www.genealogybank.com) accessed 19 June 2019, Newspaper Archives, 1690-2010. Newspaper articles in the *Columbus Daily Sun* from 1865 spoke vividly of the result of blacks being hungry in the early post-emancipation era. A November 7 article spoke of a black man found dead in a field that appeared to have died from starvation due to his physical appearance. The December 8 article gave the details of an incident where black men were discovered stealing a hog that they had took the time to kill and butcher. Upon discovery, the property owner fired his weapon and struck one of the black men who was treated and later detained by authorities.

[44] Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia 1828-1978*, 48.

> remain in the city, unless they can be forced to earn their bread. Some eight are to be put to work this morning.[45]

Freedmen in Columbus realized that they could not turn to the city of Columbus for any help in making the transition from slave to citizen. Before the Civil War, Columbus was not a segregated society. Black and white people attended the same churches but sat in assigned sections. Some white Columbus congregations allowed enslaved black people to worship in their old church buildings and others, such as St. Luke Methodist, built enslaved people their own sanctuary.[46] In post-emancipation Columbus, the racial climate had changed drastically. Still bitter from the destruction of their mills and foundries and the spilling of Confederate blood by the hands of Union soldiers, white Columbus citizens in no way desired a racially integrated society. They took every measure to make sure that the black people they formerly enslaved would never enjoy the privileges given to a white person.

The largest area of misfortune for freedmen was the restriction on education. The Georgia Slave Codes of 1829 and 1833 prohibited enslaved black people from readings and writing.[47] Columbus's churches may have permitted the attendance of black people but the city's schools forbade a black presence. Nationally, literate blacks who were formerly enslaved such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington were often self-taught unless they were able to escape the plantation to a northern destination and find an educational opportunity there. Only the most advantaged northern black people, predominantly born free, were taught to read in their

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[45] "Chain Gang Ready," *Columbus Daily Sun*, November 1, 1865, page 3, Vol. XI., Issue 54; online index and digital image, Genealogy Bank (http://www.genealogybank.com) accessed June 19, 2019, Newspaper Archives, 1690-2010.

[46] Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia 1828-1978*, 27.

[47] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Negro Common School* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1901), 18.

youth and had the chance to attend a school. Outside of that dynamic, most blacks were illiterate. Numerous black ministers, unable to read, recited parts of the Bible they memorized from their hearing. In most of the southern United States, it was illegal to teach an enslaved black person to read. But the yearning of black people, both enslaved and free blacks, to obtain an education far outweighed the fear of being arrested, whipped, or hanged for violating the discriminatory statute. This movement among blacks to obtain an education was driven by their desire to control their destinies. In essence, literacy guaranteed their freedom more than any law Congress could pass or any proclamation a president could decree. Possessing an education meant that black people would be privy to all information and knowledge, and would therefore be able to own property, create contracts, read the Bible, teach their own children, and ascend to being on an equal footing with white people who purposely kept them ignorant. Being educated brought with it the hope of freedmen removing the limits on travel and the occupations they could pursue. Above all, education presented freedmen with the possibility of creating their own schools, thus freeing them from any dependence they had on the generosity and bravery of kind white people. In the eyes of freedmen, emancipation was just the first hurdle, and an education was the finish line. With education, they would now be capable of running an entirely different race.

In 1865, all enslaved black people in Columbus had received freedom, but none had ever been inside of a classroom with white students. White students in Columbus were educated by private teachers who taught in their homes or a rented location. Multiple advertisements for private teachers and academies could be found in the local newspapers.[48] The United States government

[48] *Daily Columbus Enquirer* [GA] Union, 12 September 1865, p. 4, online index and digital image, Georgia Historic Newspapers, accessed 19 May 2019, https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn84024796/1865-09-12/ed-1/seq-3/. Presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia. In the Tuesday morning, September 12, 1865 edition of the Da*ily Columbus Enquirer*, Vol. VII, No. 218, page 4, I found multiple advertisements for private teachers and academies such as Wynton Male Academy, Wynton Female Academy, and Columbus Female Academy.

had entered the Reconstruction era and began to facilitate the process creating educational opportunities for freedmen. On March 3, 1865, Congress passed a bill that formed what would come to be known as the Freedmen's Bureau.[49] This organization would work with private white philanthropic organizations, of which Columbus had none, to find property for school buildings, recruit teachers, and organize permanent schools for the purpose of educating freedmen. Unfortunately, it would be 1866 before Columbus's freedmen would receive such government assistance. Freedmen in Columbus were cognizant of the fact that if they were to be educated, it would not be by any effort of the city of Columbus but by their own doing.

Nationally, after emancipation, (and some prior) freedmen had formed communities which increased their chances for survival and equipped them for the life that lay ahead in the post-emancipation era. In Columbus, this was no different. By 1865, freedmen in Columbus had formed civic organizations and several churches. The First African Baptist Church (possibly known to white people in Columbus as the Colored Baptist Church) was founded in 1840. What was known as the Colored Methodist Church by Columbus's white citizens was the church building built for enslaved black people by St. Luke Methodist Church on the East Commons in Columbus.[50] The Shady Grove Baptist Church was founded in 1863, literally at the site of a grove of trees where slaves would meet. [51] The oral history of Columbus's black community says

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There was an advertisement for Wesleyan Female College, which at the time was in Macon, Georgia. There was also an advertisement for the Woodstock Boarding School for girls in Cave Spring, Georgia. There was an announcement on this same page alerting readers that the Columbus High School for Young Ladies would be reopening on October 21, 1865.

[49] George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955; New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 134.

[50] Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia 1828-1978*, 27.

[51] Alva James-Johnson, "Greater Shady Grove Congregation Makes a Fresh Start at New Location," *Columbus, Ledger Enquirer,* December 31, 2016, https://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/local/article123960434.html; Larry Gierer, "First African Baptist Celebrates 175

the Old Colored Methodist Church and the Old Colored Baptist Church were the meeting places for the first school classes taught by free black people in Columbus prior to the Civil War. The classes were held at night, masked as night worship meetings to ward off suspicion of not only the classes being conducted, but the fact that there were literate black people in Columbus. Blacks who could find work, perhaps as sharecroppers, if they were unskilled, would work during the day and attend school on a church night. Under the disguise of a worship service and hidden by the echoes of call and response songs bellowed on the plantation, the genesis of education in post-emancipation Columbus, had begun.

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Years," *Columbus, Ledger Enquirer,* July 31, 2015, https://www.ledger-enquirer.com/living/religion/article30075246.html. The First African Baptist Church was started by groups of enslaved blacks who first worshipped in the white Ephesus Baptist Church. On February 14, 1829, Ephesus started building a new church building and in 1840, enslaved blacks were allowed to worship in the older building. Their first black pastor was Reverend Harry Watson in 1862. The Shady Grove Baptist Church was organized by Boston Miles and Mary Moore. The first pastor was Reverend Ashburn Shivers. He became a missionary in Liberia and resigned in the post-emancipation era. The church building was formerly a Civil War hospital, located at 1901 Second Avenue. First Baptist (white) leased the property to Shady Grove in the late 1800s. Shady Grove finally bought the property in the 1960's after leasing it for 100 years.

# CHAPTER 2
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## "GOD IS A NEGRO"

> Frederick Douglass was one who taught himself to both read and write. "From that moment," he later wrote, he understood that knowledge was "the pathway from slavery to freedom."
>
> —Eric Foner, *Forever Free* [52]

At midnight on June 14, 1866, twenty-six-year-old, Reverend Robert Alexander, was resting after a Wednesday evening church service, clueless to the terror awaiting outside his door. Suddenly, four white men broke into his bedroom where he resided in Opelika, Alabama, tied Alexander, and ferociously stabbed and beat him near death. The next day, Henry McNeal Turner, who would go on to be the first African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) bishop of Georgia, was traveling by train from Columbus, to Opelika. Turner was to meet up with Alexander, who had been appointed to an A.M.E. mission in Auburn, Alabama. With intentions of continuing his tour of the various A.M.E. ministries in east Alabama, Turner's plans were to get off at the train stop in Opelika, just seven miles shy of the mission in Auburn, and travel to the mission with Alexander who would host the mission's inspection. When Turner arrived in Opelika and made it to Alexander's home, Turner encountered the gruesomely wounded bloody, young church elder who had miraculously managed to survive until Turner's arrival. In Turner's account to the *Christian Recorder*, the official newspaper of the African American Episcopal Church, he lamented, "he had been severely cut …till he appeared, when I met him, like a lump of curdled blood."[53]

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[52] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (iBooks Edition) New York: Vintage Books, 2005.

[53] Henry McNeal Turner, "Startling Correspondence: Rev. Robert Alexander, of Auburn, Ala., brutally cut and beaten-Sent to Columbus for treatment-His death probable-Negro Schools-Negro Preachers to be

Alexander, known for his silent nature and great manners, was of small stature, weighing but 101 pounds. The severity of the stabbing and beating at the hands of the four intruders left the smaller Alexander fighting for his life. Turner had Alexander taken to Columbus to receive medical treatment, hoping to save his life, while not knowing if he would ever see the beloved minister again. The attack was heard and witnessed by black female members of Alexander's congregation who lived adjacent to him. With tears in their eyes and dread in their hearts, they desperately ran in the night to the place where the Freedmen's Bureau Agent was lodging, repetitiously beating on his door. They begged the agent to come to their rescue and prevent their minister's savage murder. The agent simply replied to the women, "I can't do anything for you" and according to the women, never got out of his bed.[54]

After emancipation, freedmen who tried to improve their social and economic conditions were often met with intimidation and violence. While supervising the A.M.E sponsored mission in Auburn, Alexander had secretly started a small, makeshift school for freedmen. When white people in Auburn and Opelika caught wind of Alexander's endeavor, they decided to make an example out of him, thus sending a message to all black people in the area. The four men who assaulted Alexander told him, "no dammed negro schools should be taught here, nor should any negro preacher remain here."[55] Because preachers were often among the few black people in a community that could read and write, their very presence was ominous to white people opposed to black social mobility. The attack on Alexander only substantiated violent white opposition to black education but it now forbade the very presence of black preachers in Auburn and Opelika.

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killed-Apathy of the Agent of the Freedmen's Bureau," *The Christian Recorder*, June 23, 1866, https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 14, 2018.

[54] Turner, "Startling Correspondence."

[55] Ibid.

In Columbus, preachers like Henry McNeal Turner went about the business of organizing people and resources to assist in the education of freedmen. In what was known at the time as the A.M.E. Church, in Columbus, Turner had established a Trustee Penny Collection, and re-launched the Class Collections in order to generate funds to support the hiring of black teachers and the purchase of supplies. Turner had just arrived in Columbus on June 29, 1866, but by July, he was vastly popular among black and white people for his oratory ability and his leadership skills.[56]

Commissioned by Lincoln, Turner was the first black chaplain in the United States Army. Being taught to read as a teen while working as a janitor in a law firm by his employers, Turner excelled in writing, working additionally as a war correspondent. Turner became widely known for the articles he published in the *Christian Recorder* about the trials and tribulations of the First Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops. Being stationed in Washington, D.C. gave Turner the opportunity to pastor one of the district's largest churches. At the end of the Civil War, Turner worked for the Freedmen's Bureau in Georgia as an army chaplain. While in Georgia, Turner assisted freedmen on the road to suffrage, organized for the Republican Party while serving as a Georgia State Representative in the Reconstruction Era.[57] It is also in Georgia where Turner, as an elder of the A.M.E. Church, began building churches, eventually establishing houses of worship all across the south. Turner's tenure in Georgia was not without controversy. He supported emigration to Liberia, a view that sharply divided black people in the post-

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[56] M.O. Saunders, "Highly Interesting from Georgia," *The Christian Recorder*, July 21, 1866, https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 14, 2018.

[57] Andre E. Johnson, "Henry McNeal Turner: Church Planter, Politician, and Public Theologian; How America's first black army chaplain fought for freedom, justice, and democracy," *Christianity Today*, August 29, 2017, https://www.christianitytoday.com, accessed March 26, 2019.

emancipation era. Turner clearly expressed his views in the *Christian Recorder*, in strong contention against Frederick Douglass and other national black anti-emigrationists:

> Liberia is the nucleus around which will cluster African civilization and Christianity. And with all our former hate of the colonization enterprise, the day is not far distant when the founders of that institution will be ranked among our greatest benefactors. Prior to the emancipation of our people, I looked upon the colonization scheme as one of the tricks of slavery, to rid the country of free negroes. But I now believe it was conceived in mercy, and founded in wisdom, and the fact of its being unpopular with several of our leading men, argues no more against its final success, than did the odium which met the introduction of abolitionism. From all that I have gleaned in my readings about Africa, (and I have read much,) I have come to this conclusion, that it is the richest continent under heaven, that her mineral and productive resources are unequalled by the world. And I am not prepared to believe, that God would without reason vein a continent with so much rich ore, seed her soil with such a variety of subsisting produce, and populate her clime with so many millions of creatures, susceptible of the highest degree of mortal intelligence and intellectuality. [58]

Turner also was known for his fiery religious views which were the precursor to what is known now as Black Liberation Theology, a belief that Jesus Christ came to Earth from Heaven to rescue people of African descent from subjugation, oppression, discrimination. Turner not only believed Africa was the home of all blacks but declared that, "God is a Negro." [59] These remarks stirred a backlash causing many to disassociate themselves with Turner's theological views. To further infuriate his critics, the married Turner had been involved with a prostitute accused of counterfeiting. By this time, Turner had become the first black United States Postmaster in Macon, Georgia but within a year he had been pressured to resign his position. Nevertheless, Turner had resurrected black education in Columbus.[60] Freedmen had been formerly being instructed under the guise of night church services, being instructed by literate volunteers from

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[58] Henry McNeal Turner, "Letter From Henry M. Turner," *The Christian Recorder*, November 24, 1866. https://www.accessible.com (accessed December 14, 2018).

[59] Andre E. Johnson, "Henry McNeal Turner."

[60] Andre E. Johnson, "Henry McNeal Turner."

the black community. Both the black Methodist and Baptist congregations raised whatever funds they could to support the secret night schools in Columbus at their respective churches. Because retaliatory violence by white people was a very palpable threat, black people could not reach out any white Columbus citizens for help. For assistance in the creation of later schools, black people would be accompanied by northern whites.

Help from northern whites came by way of the Freedmen's Aid Society. Founded in 1861 by the American Missionary Association (AMA), the Freedmen's Aid Society, received support chiefly from the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches in the north.[61] It organized northern teachers and provided housing with the mission of establishing schools and teaching freedmen and their children. On February 4, 1862, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society was formed. By March 6, thirty-eight teachers had been hired and $5,367.55 raised to pay salaries.[62] Affiliated with the Methodist Church, the aims of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society were: relieve bodily suffering to organize industry; give instructions in the rudiments of knowledge, morals, religion and civilized life; and inform the public of the needs, rights, capacities and disposition of the Freedmen.[63] Teachers supported by this organization were required to submit regular correspondence reports. From these reports we know of the schools' progress and day-to-day challenges. Together the American Missionary Association and the New England Freedmen's Aid Society founded more than 500 schools and colleges for

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[61] Richard Gause Boone, *Education in the United States: Its History from the Earliest Settlements* (Freeport, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889), 351.

[62] New England Freedmen's Aid Society. New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records. Educational Commission Records, 1862-1874. Volume 1, Box 1, Folder 21. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

[63] New England Freedmen's Aid Society. New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records. Educational Commission Records, 1862-1874. Volume 1, Box 1, Folder 21. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

freedmen in the south after the war, preparing freedmen for careers as teachers, nurses, and other professions.[64] White missionary teachers such as these relocated to Columbus.

The white missionary school instruction of black children in Columbus started in January of 1866. One of the first teachers to respond to the dire need of formerly enslaved blacks was Sarah Chase. Sarah and her sister Lucy were from a family of Quakers, living in Worchester, Massachusetts. Feeling the call to serve, only eight days after the start of the Civil War, a twenty-five-year-old Sarah Chase petitioned her father's blessing to venture south to become a nurse for the Union war effort. A little over a year later, Sarah was alerted of the freedmen's struggles by a friend name William Channing. Channing was honest about the hard work that lay ahead but was certain that helping the freedmen's plight was, "the only way of securing health, order, decency, and improvement." Channing's riveting letter influenced Chase to join the Freedmen teacher effort:[65]

> Washington, Nov. 4 1862
> Dear Miss Chase,
> There are [in Alexandria, Virginia] now some 700 or 800, receiving govt aid, in the way of shelter, rations, clothing &c; and the field of usefulness is large among the women & children. Capt Wyman has applied for leave to build a large barrack, like the one we saw in Washington, & I trust it may soon be done. That is the only way of securing health, order, decency & improvement. Miss Wilbur received from Capt W. authority to act as visitor & superintendent and she will this week begin her ministry. She would be very glad to have your assistance & sympathy—if you see your way clear to maintenance here. But the Government, for various reasons, will give no other aid than a daily ration,—as they are anxious to report to Congress & the country that the Freedmen are self-supporting & cost the Nation nothing. And I regret that our Society has no means to do more, than they are already doing. It seems right & fair to you & to all, that you should know exactly the present state of affairs. You must make a bold venture, independently, if you come. But Miss Wilbur will heartily welcome your cooperation.

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[64] Clara Merritt DeBoer, "Blacks and the American Missionary Association," United Church of Christ, accessed March 30, 2018, http://www.ucc.org/about-us_hidden-histories_blacks-and-the-american.

[65] William H. Channing to Sarah Chase, Nov. 4, 1862," Northern Visions of Race, Region & Reform: In the Press and Letters of Freedmen and Freedmen's Teachers in the Civil War Era, accessed March 6, 2019, https://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/Manuscripts/Chase/02-05-1866.html.

Yrs truly—W. H. CHANNING

Having been convinced by Channing's letter, Sarah Chase and her sister Lucy became freedmen teachers with the New England Freedmen's Aid Society on November 8, 1865, in Boston. They were assigned to deploy to Georgia where they would be starting the first missionary freedmen schools in the state. Sarah Chase wrote a letter dated February 5, 1866 in which she disclosed her early experiences in Columbus:

> When I last wrote we had just opened a school at Savannah.…Wishing to work where there was the most need (there being so many places where nothing has been done for the Freedmen, and where they are sorely persecuted), we came here, where a school house, built by the soldiers, had just been destroyed by the citizens and the feeling is intensely bitter against anything Northern. The affairs of the Bureau have been rightfully mismanaged here; and our Govt has been disgraced by the troops who were stationed here. Now the troops are withdrawn, and the people are chafing at the presence of the Bureau and "a few pious and enthusiastic N.E. school marms:" "both must be cleared out of the place," says the daily press….We have never seen any discourtesy in any of the citizens, but we know that we are generally discussed in circles; and many plans are proposed for "getting rid" of us.—We have glorious schools in full blast - And I am so satisfied with the work here that nothing in the world could make me wish to be in another place, or doing anything else. In my own day school and night school, I have 140 pupils, who have made truly wonderful progress, in the five weeks I have been teaching. How much I wish you could see my school! A more earnest, fine looking set of scholars could not be found—than I could show….I find the people here more tidy and thrifty than in any place I am acquainted with—though many are intensely poor—and there has been nothing given them from the North, they are always tidy, cheerful and hopeful, ever anxious to improve…
>
> There are a number of colored people in this place who are very well off—and they cheerfully bear their burden of the new dispensation, but in a population of about 8 thousand they can do little. I shall organize mutual relief societies in the Negro churches (Baptist and Methodist) as soon as possible. Large numbers are working for their food alone; and the white people tell them that they are not free yet. Across the river, in Alabama, several Negroes have been shot because they were free!
>
> …Union! I can more easily conceive of the Lion and Lambs lying down together, than of a union of the North and South. In all the counties around here, the Union familys are suffering shameful persecution, and the people do not hesitate to say that those who favor the North, shall not live in their communities. We have now with us a family who fled for their lives from their plantation—fourteen miles out—They have never owned slaves & always been loyal; and consequently the neighbors have been killing their cattle and taking their farming utensils and doing many things to make them leave their place. A few nights ago, a regular armed force from the county round threw out guards around their house, and surrounded it for the purpose of killing the whole family—but finding one of the sons absent, withdrew to decide whether to postpone it for another time or not—in the delay a part of the family escaped to the woods…

> …Such things are occurring the whole time; but it does not do to write North about them; for if they get in print, it gives encouragement to many communities who are ready to go and do likewise. Now the military courts are withdrawn I see no alternative for Southern Unionists, in many parts of the South, between constant persecution, and going North…
>
> …No mortal is happier than I am in my work; and my success is fairly intoxicating. -- I give no thought to the hatred of the whites, knowing how useful it is my good fortune to be, to the blacks—and how truly they love me. We lose so many letters through the mail—I have no reason to think those I mail, will reach their destination—consequently I cannot feel much inspiration in writing. Our letters are probably opened, by order of the secret societies, to see that we write nothing that they are unwiling [sic] to have known at the North.[66]

Chase's letter provided incomparable insight on issues surrounding freedmen education in Columbus. Chase starts with the removal of federal troops from Columbus. Without military protection and with the Georgia Freedmen's Bureau on the decline, both freedmen and missionary teachers would become easy targets of disgruntled white Columbus citizens.[67] According to Chase, freedmen were being beguiled about their free status, and in what is now known as Phenix City, Alabama, blacks were being shot for proclaiming their free status. The Georgia Freedmen's Bureau, responsible for the establishment of many Freedmen's schools throughout the south, was no longer as efficient in building schoolhouses or containing the fury of hostile white people looking to drive freedmen out of their towns. The Georgia Freedmen's Bureau was already stretching itself to supervise 132 counties and approximately 59,000 square miles. To add to its assignment, the Georgia Bureau also had within its jurisdiction riverside rice plantations and coastal barrier islands where, early in 1865, freedmen had established their own

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[66] Sarah Chase to Sarah R. May, Columbus, Georgia, Feb. 5, 1866, in "Northern Visions of Race, Region & Reform: In the Press and Letters of Freedmen and Freedmen's Teachers in the Civil War Era," American Antiquarian Society, accessed March 6, 2019, https://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/Manuscripts/Chase/02-05-1866.html.

[67] Paul A. Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), xiv. Cimbala states that the Georgia Freedmen's Bureau would dissolve by 1870..

independent communities.[68] Even with such a daunting task, historians have criticized the Georgia Bureau for catering to white southerners and not pressing hard enough to secure protection of and economic viability for Georgia's freedmen.[69] Most of the freedmen in Columbus lived in extreme poverty with little to no food. The euphoria of emancipation had diminished, and freedmen were facing the reality of being free in the white south. Without the military's protection and the Freedmen's Bureau solid support, Sarah Chase and her colleagues found themselves in unfavorable conditions, attempting to provide an education to freedmen on the brink of disaster.

Although Chase mentions that there were eight thousand black people in Columbus, including some that were "very well off," the population of black children were too great to fund without some type of government involvement. Besides, of the eight thousand blacks, a great portion had not intended on remaining in Columbus. Many were contemplating a northern exodus to famed cities with thriving black populations such as Philadelphia. Others were planning to leave the U.S. altogether and emigrate to Liberia.[70] Of the eight thousand black people, most were

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[68] Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation,* xiv.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Henry McNeal Turner, "Letter From Henry M. Turner," *The Christian Recorder,* November 24, 1866. https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 14, 2018; Matthew F. K. McDaniel, *Emigration to Liberia: From the Chattahoochee Valley of Georgia and Alabama, 1853-1903* (Montgomery, Alabama: New South Books, 2013), 15-18. Henry McNeal Turner said in a letter published in the *Christian Recorder* that "A large number of our people recently left here for Liberia." Turner's letter was written in November of 1866. In *Emigration to Liberia,* McDaniel does not mention this departure. He instead states the American Colonization Society (ACS) promised that there would be a ship in Savannah in October 1866, as reported by the *Macon Messenger.* Turner was in Macon when he wrote his letter. McDaniel does not confirm that the ship was in Savannah November 1866. He does mention that *Columbus Enquirer* reported in October 1866 that the ACS had purchased a new ship. McDaniel goes on to say that blacks in Columbus and LaGrange both had applied for an 1867 trip to Liberia that ended up departing in May 1867. McDaniel does not report blacks in Columbus nor Macon departed to Liberia in 1866. The question here is did McDaniel fail in his research to find this trip that Turner is referring to or was Turner's use of the word "recently" altogether ambiguous and thus may not apply to the span of time in which his letter was published? When Turner said "recently" did he mean a few day ago, weeks ago,

destitute. Blacks who were free before emancipation were in a better economic state and had been the benefactors of the previous black school startups. Much of the funding that financed post-emancipation education had been contributed through church fundraising efforts, but still a great amount was produced by the philanthropy of previously freed black people in Columbus. Without help from the city of Columbus and the national government, Chase had to solicit this very small, relatively affluent population of pre-emancipation free black people to fund the efforts of her and her colleagues. It would be these same cadre of prominent black citizens that funded the black educational efforts after Chase's departure.

Sarah Chase had arrived in Columbus in January only to find the school building where she was supposed to start instruction destroyed by indignant white citizens in Columbus. She also was able to sense the intensity of resentment towards northern missionaries, or anyone northern for that matter, that arrived in the south to do anything for the benefit or greater welfare of the Freedmen. The animosity against any strides towards black education in Columbus was apparent, but Chase seemed to have not anticipated the anti-Yankee backlash as a result of sectional conflicts and, but of course, a Civil War in which the south was not victorious. As apparent in Chase's letter, Union sympathizers in the south were also the target of violence by loyal Confederates in the Chattahoochee Valley. In addition, the white citizens of Columbus resented northern teachers instructing their former enslaved black people. In the May 21, 1866 edition of the *The Daily Sun,* a white citizen declared, "The Negro will be educated: Let it be done by Southerners and colored men; many of the latter of which are fully competent."[71] The *Freedman's Record* reported that a white male citizen said, "We want no Northern interference,

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months ago, or years ago? Because I can neither confirm nor deny the meaning of Turner's statement I refrained from including in my study that there was a 1866 departure of blacks from anywhere in Georgia, but did acknowledge black interest in emigration to Liberia.

[71] "Editorial," *The Daily Sun,* May 21, 1866.

and we won't have it; We want no Northern teachers, and we won't have them teaching the blacks to hate us, and to fight us; they will keep it up after the Yankees go away."[72] Disgruntled poor white parents informed missionary teachers that they wished "their children had the advantages the niggers were enjoying," but added, "I never will get so low as to have my children learning with nigs."[73] This hostility was reported by the missionary teachers to their superiors at the New England Freedmen's Aid Society which then was published in the *National Anti-slavery Standard*.

> As to the poor whites of the South, the testimony was equally decided, but far less favorable. Little inclined to learn, though intensely ignorant and degraded, they are almost invariably hostile to the education and elevation of the blacks, and they do what they can to annoy the teachers and obstruct their labors. In one case an actual plot was discovered among Southern "ladies" in Columbus, Ga., to hang, with their own hands, the "Yankee school-ma'ams" in their vicinity.[74]

The publication of the views of Sarah Chase and J.S. Banfield rendering it almost impossible for them to remain in Columbus. Not only were the publications being read nationally, but as confirmed in Chase's letter and other freedmen missionary teachers' letters to follow, mail to and from the teachers was being seized due to suspicions of Columbus's whites. Citizens thought the missionary teachers may be encouraging the freedmen to use literacy to gain the advantage over whites in Columbus. White's suspicions were due partly to the language used by missionary teachers in their correspondence and in publications. The teachers spoke of immediate gains being made by the students and the generous fundraising efforts of the freedmen while characterizing white citizens as "ignorant" and "bitter." The missionary teachers lamented the

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[72] Lucy Chase to Miss Stevenson, 1 June 1866, *Freedmen's Record.* 7 (July 1866), 131-2.

[73] Sarah E. Chase to Mr. May, 12 April 1866, in Henry L. Swint, ed., *Dear Ones At Home*: *Letters From Contraband Camps, 1822-1909* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), 202.

[74] "Our Boston Correspondence; Hot! Hot! Hot!" *The National Anti-Slavery Standard,* July 21, 1866, https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 14, 2018.

meager condition of the buildings they worked in. As it was the case in both Sarah Chase's and J.S. Banfield's letters, the word "unfavorable" was frequently appeared:[75]

> COLUMBUS, GA., June 5, 1866.
>
> MISS STEVENSON,—As this is probably the last letter you will receive from Columbus before we leave, I judge that a review of what has been accomplished in the free schools during the five months and a half that we have been here, if not expected, will, at all events, not be inappropriate.
>
> On the first day of last January free schools were opened for the first time in the city of Columbus by our little party of four teachers. They were begun under rather unfavorable circumstances. In the first place, our schoolroom (the Methodist Colored Church) was so open that it was impossible to warm it comfortably. I will not attempt to describe our sufferings from cold, for fear you might think I exaggerate. It is sufficient to say that there was nothing to the windows but blinds, the glass having been entirely broken out by the explosion of the confederate magazine near by, and that the weather was freezing cold . Our inconveniences and disagreeables were however more than compensated by the liberality and appreciation manifested by our colored friends. At one time they attempted to rent a house for us, and even collected about $40 towards it, before we were aware of their plan. It was too great an undertaking for them then in their poor condition, and I advised them to wait a little longer. I think they are the most liberal colored people I ever met with; and I have always encouraged them to do what they could for the poorest among themselves and for the Society that has furnished them with teachers. Scarcely a single book has been given to them since I came here, and they have invariably met the current expenses of the day and night schools. Under the circumstances I think they have done admirably. They pay the rent of $12 per month for one school-house that we were obliged to hire. The night scholars paid about $60 to meet the various expenses of the school. Though the white citizens at first laughed at the thought of educating negroes, they are generally inclined to admit that the children in our free schools have made much progress. They were very bitter towards the Yankee school-ma'ams and school-masters, and it is not uncommon now to find some abusive article in the papers published here. Yet I believe we are looked upon with far greater favor than we were months ago. Strong opposition yet exists, and an effort has been made, or at least talked of, to induce the colored people to approve of the Southern people superseding us by opening pay schools another season. This utterly failed. The colored folks know what is for their interest. I have urged the colored people to try to support at least two teachers the coming season, and they are pleased with the idea, and will respond to the request in a short time. They will do what they are able toward supporting free schools in their midst.
>
> With this imperfect sketch of the past and future of the work here, I must close.
> Respectfully yours,
> J. S. BANFIELD.

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[75] J.S. Banfield to Miss Stevenson, June 5, 1866, in " Extracts From Teachers' Letters," *The Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal)*, July 1, 1866. https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 14, 2018.

Written four months after Chase's letter, Banfield's correspondence in overt fashion, reveals the challenges of the first wave of missionary teachers over the duration of their tenure in Columbus. Banfield's letter if chock full of details that divulge what the missionary teacher encountered. Banfield alerts his superiors that the teachers had been holding classes in the Black Methodist church, that due to an explosion, had no windows to shield them from the cold weather. At some point, the teachers transitioned to another building rented by the freedmen. Banfield speaks of the poverty of the freedmen in order to emphasis that despite having little, they were generous enough to attempt to secure housing for the teachers. Banfield sends a list to Ms. Hannah E. Stevenson (same recipient as above), dated November 13, 1866, that lists the name of blacks contributing to the sum of $113.35 for the purpose of supporting the "free schools."[76] Banfield also discloses that Columbus white citizens aimed to persuade freedmen to discontinue attending instruction from the missionary teachers and instead, wait for Columbus to start a private school for freedmen next year. Banfield says that this plan by Columbus whites failed and then tips his own hat including that "the colored folks know what is for their interest" insinuating that the missionary teachers could provide by far a better education than whites in Columbus. Banfield seemed optimistic and confident that his band of teachers would return to Columbus to teach the freedmen, but time would relinquish a different outcome.

[76] J.S. Banfield to Miss Stevenson (Hannah E. Stevenson), November 13, 1866, in "Extracts from teachers' letters," *The Freedmen's Record* (*The Freedmen's Journal*), November 13, 1866, December 1, 1866. https://www.accessible.com (accessed December 14, 2018).

# CHAPTER 3
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## "AN INTENSE DESIRE"

The very feeling of inferiority which slavery forced upon them fathered an intense desire to rise out of their condition by means of education.

—W.E.B. Du Bois[77]

With emancipation came an emerging hope of blacks to become literate. This hope was re-ignited every time they crossed paths with a literate black person and heard news in the wind of the Freedmen's Bureau's efforts in establishing schools elsewhere in the south. In 1865, although optimistic, blacks had no real sense of what the Lincoln administration would do, besides emancipation, to benefit the newly free black population. Blacks were jubilant after the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau in March followed by Lee's surrender but were soon discomfited by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Historians have written plenty on the apprehension of the nation after Lincoln's sudden death, but few scholars have generated studies on the freedmen's sentiment. In stark contrast, many freedmen saw Lincoln as their emancipator, but they were not overwhelmed at his death. They were sad but not hopeless. Though Lincoln was dead, the dream of freedom was more than just alive…now it was realized. Freedmen may have credited Lincoln with slavery's departure, but they were not any less eager to start their new future. Frederick Douglass conveyed a similar attitude. Before twenty-four hours could pass after the assassination, Douglass said to a public audience, "Though Abraham Lincoln dies, the Republic lives."[78]

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[77] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 638, as cited in Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 2.

[78] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick* Douglass (1881; reprint, New York: Collier, 1962), 371; "Our Martyred President," speech delivered at City Hall, Rochester, April 15, 1865, Douglass Papers, ser. 1, 4:74–76, as cited in David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New

Furthermore, freedmen were stoked about the opportunity to receive an education. Literacy was a point of dignity for black people in this era. It could be seen in the way they spoke of those of African descent who were literate and the animosity they harbored for their enslavers who prohibited their literacy. James W. C. Pennington adamantly expresses in his memoir titled, *The Fugitive Blacksmith: or Events in the History of James W.C. Pennnington*, "There is one sin that slavery committed against me, which I can never forgive. It robbed me of my education."[79] Although Pennington was Yale's first black divinity school student and became a teacher in a black school in Newtown, Long Island, he maintained his disposition in regard to the opportunity he felt slavery initially robbed him of. In 1879 Harriet Beecher Stowe said of the freedmen's campaign for education: "They rushed not to the grog-shop but to the schoolroom—they cried for the spelling-book as bread, and pleaded for teachers as a necessity of life."[80] Stowe spoke of the African American's ongoing passion to be educated at all costs. Ronald Butchart noted W.E.B. Du Bois' recollection, "The very feeling of inferiority which slavery forced upon them fathered an intense desire to rise out of their condition by means of education.''[81] Contrary to the findings of earlier historical studies, African Americans did not wait on whites to start the process of building schools. They were cognizant of the fact if they had to wait on assistance from whites, their education may never be attained. After all, they had been enslaved over four

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York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 460-461. Blight says that he also relied on a handwritten manuscript version of this speech, "in which the language, if not the spirit, of the published text changes." Speech on Lincoln's death, Rochester, handwritten MS, Evans Collection, Savannah, scrapbook 4.

[79] James W.C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith: or Events in the History of James W.C. Pennington,* 3rd ed. (London: Charles Gilpin, 5, Bishopsgate Without, 1850), 56.

[80] James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 5; James W. Fraser, *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America,* 2nd ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016), 73.

[81] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 638, as cited in Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 2.

hundred years before seeing emancipation. How long would it take for the U.S. government to mandate African American literacy? They could simply wait no longer. This is substantiated by the existence of private black schools before the Civil War. In Washington D.C. and Baltimore, free black children were secretly educated while the nation's impending conflict drew closer. Free black communities put a race of people on their shoulders and accepted the burden of educating black children. As Union forces advanced into the south, cities in the Confederate States of America began to take advantage of the occupation and established free schools for black children.[82] Not only did black students emerge but so too did black teachers eager to transfer whatever knowledge they had attained. Ronald Butchart notes multiple instances of black people starting their own schools before and during the Civil War such as a school in Lawrence, Kansas with one hundred students at the start of the war and black schools in Union-occupied New Orleans.[83] Butchart also reports that in 1864, an agent of the National Freedmen's Relief Association went to the rural parishes of Louisiana with the intent of establishing schools but observed '''the colored people themselves were ahead of us,' with flourishing schools in operation supported by a tuition system that exempted orphans and students with fathers in the military."[84] Mary S. Osborne, a northern white teacher, embarking on starting a school in Church Creek, Maryland, in 1865 discovered likewise. "Immediately on their emancipation," she wrote, "and for nearly a year those who had been able by any means to gain a knowledge of letters have been imparting it to others."[85] In 1866, Georgia saw the rise of freedmen associations and civic organizations founded by African Americans, in several locations across the state. Before the

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[82] John Watson Alvord, *Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedom* (United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1868) as cited in Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People,* 4.

[83] Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People,* 5.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

advent of assistance from white missionary teachers and northern philanthropy, blacks free before the Civil War and newly emancipated blacks banned together, merging whatever resources they had to build, staff, and operate schools for their children. The 7th U.S. Colored Infantry created a literacy education program for black noncommissioned officers.[86] It is a myth that black people wandered aimlessly out of slavery, misguided, unaware, and unprepared for the opportunities that freedom presented. Not only had they planned, but they had created civic organizations, associations, churches, and communities both prior to and after the war that would support black schools. James D. Anderson concludes, "Virtually every account by historians or contemporary observers stresses the ex-slaves' demand for universal schooling."[87]

These trends also echoed in Columbus. Blacks had founded small freedmen schools after emancipation with the aid of black churches and civic organizations such as the Sisters of Laymen and the Sisters of Light. These civic organizations hosted performances and dinners for the purpose of raising an ongoing benevolence fund for blacks in need of Columbus.[88] The Columbus Freedmen's Aid Society, created in 1867, was headed by prominent free blacks; Rev. Lynch Lamar served as president and Lucius Monroe, treasurer.[89] Colleges like Oberlin had earned a reputation for producing black women graduates who would travel from Ohio to teach black children in the south. The watchful eye of the Columbus city newspapers observed these

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[86] Donld R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2004), 17. On the role of the Union army in contributing to black literacy, see also Alvord, *First Semi-Annual Report* (January 1866), both as cited in Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 6.

[87] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 5.

[88] Sarah C. Barnes to Ednah Dow Cheney, Columbus, GA, 31 December 1867, in "Extracts From Teachers Letters," *The Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal)*, March 1, 1868, https://www.accessible.com (accessed December 14, 2018).

[89] J.S. Banfield to Hannah Stevenson, Columbus, GA, 26 January 1867, in "Extracts From Teachers Letters," *The Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal)*, March 1, 1867, https://www.accessible.com (accessed December 14, 2018).

developments in Columbus along with their progressive mindset and aggressive behavior as a merged free population. The *Columbus Daily Sun* reported that on Monday afternoon, September 11, 1865 "a colored 'gemman' from Boston," for the free of twenty-five cents, spoke at the Colored Methodist Church to the freedmen of Columbus concerning "negro suffrage."[90] Now that blacks in Columbus has secured freedom, they (as blacks were nationally) intended on reaping all the benefits.

Some blacks in Columbus had decided that Georgia and the United States altogether was no longer where they desired to call home. Relocating to Liberia appeared attractive to many blacks bringing with it the possibility of a brand-new start in an African country with an all-black government. The idea of an English-speaking country where racism would apparently be non-existent was irresistible to some freedmen. As a result, in 1866, the American Colonization Society (ACS) purchased a new 1,016-ton ship named *Golconda* and began advertising regular sailing to Liberia each November and May.[91] In *Emigration to Liberia: From the Chattahoochee Valley of Georgia and Alabama, 1853-1903,* Matthew F.K. McDaniel, records "By February 1867, the ACS had received 78 applications for emigration from Columbus and another 25 from nearby LaGrange, Georgia."[92] As many as eight people from Columbus-were on the May departure for Liberia. By 1868, interest-among blacks in Columbus was through the roof. Freedmen Philip Monroe, a painter, sent ACS a list of "four hundred and twenty names" of persons wishing to emigrate to Liberia and the suggestion of "about three hundred more."[93] Monroe stated in his letter that he had grown sick of his condition in Columbus and wanted to

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[90] "Lecture on Negro Suffrage," *Columbus Daily Sun,* September 9, 1865.

[91] McDaniel, *Emigration to Liberia,* 17.

[92] McDaniel, *Emigration to Liberia,* 17.

[93] Ibid.

leave for Liberia as soon as possible. His letter is proof that blacks in Columbus were in a perplexing situation, one strong enough to warrant leaving the United States for ever. Blacks' desire for an education was predicated on the belief that literacy would deliver them from poverty and dependency, while making them more employable. While some blacks received an education by way of the freedmen schools, others desired an immediate change and felt they could not wait for the south and the country to change. Later that year, Philip Monroe, 27, departed for Liberia with his wife Victoria, 26, and his two children, Philip, Jr. and Mary.[94]

When missionary teachers arrived in Columbus, their first stint was short-lived. Although blacks did what they could to support financially the initial wave of New England Freedmen's Aid Society teachers, the backlash from the angry white citizens of Columbus was too great to convince Chase, Banfield, and others to stay. If missionary assistance was to be permanent, something drastic would have to happen first to persuade a new wave of white missionary teachers to stay. In 1867 and 1868, missionary education in Columbus got a boost with the appointment of Randolph Mott to mayor *pro tempore.* A staunch Unionist and business leader, he persuaded the Freedmen's Bureau to erect a new, state of the art schoolhouse. In response to the recommendation by Bureau Superintendent of Education, Edmund A. Ware, in April 1868, General E.E. Sibley, assistant commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in Georgia, made such a request to the city council. After acquiring the funds locally, the city of Columbus purchased four half-acre lots on the corner of 5th Avenue and 16th Street from Henry E. Epping. A two-story wooden facility was constructed as the first school built by non-blacks to educate black children. In December 1868, John R. Lewis, Georgia's state superintendent of education for the bureau, reported that the U.S. Government had financed "a large school building….The building

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[94] Ibid., 82. McDaniel includes in his book a list of Chattahoochee Valley emigrants to Liberia 1867-68.

cost $6,508.04 and seated 250 students."[95] The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) subsequently built what would come to be known as the Claflin School.[96]

Caroline Alfred of Massachusetts served as the Claflin School's first principal. She was thirty-five when she began there in 1868 at the school's opening and served throughout the eight years the New England Freedmen's Aid Society operated the school. Alfred invited the Republican governor of Massachusetts, William Claflin (who the school was named in honor of), to the school's dedication. Former abolitionist and successful businessman, Claflin was widely known as a financer of schools, such as Wilberforce University in Ohio, and his namesake, Claflin University, in Spartanburg, South Carolina.[97] In the invitation letter Alfred wrote, "in recognition of your long and earnest labors in the cause of the oppressed, [the Freedmen's Bureau has] decided to term the new building erected by them in this city, for the use of the Freedmen's School, the 'Claflin School.'"

Along with Alfred, there were four teachers recorded in the June 1870 census: Mary A. Fowler, age 31, born in Massachusetts; Harriett Freeman, age 32, from Maine; Anna D. Holmes, age 23, from Louisiana; and Anna L. Marrion, age 30, also hailing from Massachusetts.[98] For the Claflin Academy of Boston and other such sponsoring organizations, sending northern teachers

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[95] Monthly Reports of the State Superintendent of Education of Georgia, BRFAL (write out the name rather than using the acronym), n.p. also *Eighth Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen*. July 1, 1869 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869).

[96] It was one of about fifty such schools it built in Georgia. This organization was created by the Army Appropriations Act of July 13, 1866.

[97] Blinzy L. Gore, *On a Hilltop High: The Origin and History of Claflin College to 1984* (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Co., 1994), 25-27.

[98] U.S. Federal Census, 1870, Georgia, Muscogee County, Columbus, Ward 1, 572A, accessed March 30, 2018, http://www.ancestry.com.

to southern schools was considered missionary work.[99] The Claflin teachers were enthusiastic about their mission and had strong admiration for their pupils despite having their resolve tested by the backlash from opponents of northern teachers in the 1870s south. Each year, Alfred's staff would change as a result of teachers coming and going. Alfred wrote to New England Freedmen's Aid Society Teacher's Committee secretary, Ednah Dow Cheney, discussing the level of discrimination in Columbus. Alfred conveys to Cheney her disdain for seeing black men, women, and children on chain gangs. She assured Cheney that chain gangs were not fables as maybe one would think in 1869.[100] Alfred's letters and others from her associates provide a unique look into what blacks in Columbus, both adult and child, endured during the early years of Reconstruction. It is not just the operations of the Claflin school that is revealed but also the resistance of the city of Columbus to forbid most means of the advancement of its newest African American citizens.

The City Council of Columbus had been making plans to form a school system but nothing materialized until 1872. Columbus city leaders had two clear aims of a school system: (1) educate white children in public schools and (2) create enough public schools for black students to force the private schools, especially the missionary schools ran by freedmen's aid organizations, out of Columbus. Black public schools established and staffed by the city would fall under municipal jurisdiction. This would mean that fears of blacks receiving a northern, racially charged education at the hands of abolitionist missionaries could be laid to rest. It also would empower the efforts of the city to destroy any momentum blacks were making in social

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[99] Victoria Huntzinger, "The Birth of Southern Public Education: Columbus, GA 1864-1904" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1992), 122.

[100] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Dow Cheney, Columbus, GA, 5 November 1869, in "Teacher Letters," *The Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal)*, February 1, 1870, https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 9, 2018.

mobility. Alfred's July 28, 1873 letter addressed to Lucretia Crocker, a member of the New England Freedman's Aid Society's Committee on Teaching, reveals an attempt by the city of Columbus to obtain the Claflin School building to house a public school.[101] Whether this particular public, or free school, would be black or white is unknown, but because of its size and usefulness, as well as a recently built structure, the city desired it. Besides, Claflin, there were three other very small private schools African Americans had been attending. As early as 1862, literate African Americans had been traveling through cities in the south with significant black populations looking to employ themselves as private teachers to the African Americans who could afford to hire them. This practice eventually spawned a few private schools in Columbus that meet in churches, homes, or rented properties. The private schools, including Claflin, charged tuition that some blacks could not afford. This sent some of the city's black population, and those in the rural areas who always had less, in search of other options.

Meanwhile, the city of Columbus's plan to create public schools to deter Claflin's enrollment was well on its way. By 1872, the city had established a public school for African Americans. Only July 8, ninety-four African Americans were the first students at the new (Colored) Public School.[102] The new schoolboard rented rooms in a popular Columbus meeting venue, Temperance Hall.[103] And added draw to the city's public schools for African Americans, public schools were staffed by African American teachers. To the detriment of the students, their teachers could hardly read and only do small amounts of math. Their educational level was but one step above their students. Claflin, on the other hand, had started graduating students and

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[101] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, Massachusetts, 28 July1873, Box 1 File 1, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f01#3.

[102] Huntzinger, "The Birth of Southern Public Education," 113-114.

[103] Ibid.

employing them as teachers. Cheney and Alfred felt confident that not only were their new African American employees qualified to instruct students but that they were substantially more capable than Columbus's black public school teachers.[104] Alfred constantly expressed her and her teachers' devotion to educating African American students in Columbus while possessing a stern belief that black students would not fare well if placed in the city's meager black public schools. More than ever, Alfred was determined to demonstrate she and Claflin's teachers were providing an alternative to a black public-school system they believed was intentionally sabotaged by the Columbus school board.

By 1873, the next phase of the Columbus school board's plan was underway. Columbus Schools' Superintendent, George Dews, and the city's school board met with the Claflin trustees in an attempt to purchase the school. In a letter, Alfred alluded to pressures from Columbus citizens. She informed Crocker informing her that Alfred herself had also been contacted by Dews by letter requesting the New England Freedmen's Aid Society permit the purchase of the Claflin School.[105] In the July 28 letter, Alfred wrote, "The School Board are making a most determined effort to obtain the building, but I am confident they will not succeed this year. Am very glad that you were so careful in your reply as they will not think the better of us for balking them in any of their plans."[106] Alfred also spoke of a shift in her school staff as well as her residence. The 1870 U.S. Census reveals that Alfred lived in a house in Columbus, rented by

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[104] Ednah Cheney, "Report of the Teacher's Committee, For the year ending March 19, 1871," *The Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal)*, June 1, 1869, https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 14, 2018.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 28 July 1873, Box 1 File 1, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f01#3.

African Americans, together with four teachers from the Claflin School.[107] By 1873, three of those teachers had left Claflin and Columbus, leaving Alfred and Anna D. Holmes in the house. In the July 28, 1973 letter, Alfred informed Crocker that Holmes planned not to return and she (Alfred) must decide whether to renew the lease on the house.[108] Edna Cheney's 1871 report revealed that Claflin's enrollment had reached over two hundred pupils.[109] Three teachers departing Claflin (at the same time) knowing they would create a need for teachers at the school speaks to the degree measure of impending danger felt by the missionary teachers. A group of young black boys who attended Claflin were violently attacked while walking home from Sunday school. The headline in the *Christian Register* read, "Atrocious Assault on Colored Children by White Boys—These Bruise and Cut the Black Scholars."[110] This article, submitted by Alfred, explained that some of her young boys, (all African American) were attacked by a group of young white boy and men. The group stabbed one of her students, Warren Berry, multiple times. Alfred stated that his survival was "very doubtful," as "the principal wound is under the left shoulder blade, quite through to the lungs."[111] In the article, Alfred asked for linen, food, and money to help care for Berry and his family members, because his mother had to quit work to care for him and they were greatly impoverished. Alfred said the family only had

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[107] U.S. Federal Census, 1870, Georgia, Muscogee County, Columbus, Ward 1, 572A, accessed March 30, 2018, http://www.ancestry.com.

[108] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 28 July 1873, Box 1 File 1, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f01#3.

[109] Edna Cheney, "Report of the Teacher's Committee, For the year ending March 19, 1871," *The Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal)*, June 1, 1869, https://www.accessible.com, accessed December 14, 2018.

[110] Caroline Alfred, "Atrocious Assault on Colored Children by White Boys—These Bruise and Cut the Black Scholars," *Christian Register*, March 11, 1871, 1A.

[111] Alfred, "Atrocious Assault," 1A.

cornbread and bacon to eat. Alfred not only shared her frustration for the predicament African Americans in Columbus, but she also disclosed that African Americans were being killed. “But a killing here is of no consequence, not one-tenth of them get in the papers.”[112] To add to the troubles, Alfred believed whole-heartedly that her mail was being intercepted to and from New England. Because of this, she felt restricted in her ability to candidly discuss the situation that confronted her and the teachers. She cautioned one correspondent, "I send this letter to the North to be mailed thinking it best—just now to do so and if you will send your reply in a plain envelope I shall be much obliged, hoping to see you ere long and be able to say some things I cannot write."[113]

The pressure to give up the school as well as the hostility from Columbus’s white citizens created an intense work environment for Alfred and her missionary teachers. White citizens in Columbus were certain that Alfred and her teachers were convincing blacks not to trust southern white people. The idea that a group of Yankee whites were preferred over Columbus’s whites who once owned them did not set well with the former enslavers. As expressed openly in newspapers, Columbus white citizens staunchly opposed anyone who they felt aided blacks in Columbus to organize and unite against the white power structure in the city. Alfred and Claflin’s white teachers were not the first white Americans that were pressured to stop aiding blacks in Columbus. As a matter of fact, this had happened before, and the consequences were deadly.

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 31 May 1874, Columbus, GA, Box 1 File 8, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen’s Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f08#16.

In 1868, Columbus was a thermometer for the temperature of the nation. When Alfred and the second wave of missionary teachers arrived, they had stepped into a political frying pan. After the famed 1866 congressional election, the Georgia legislature cast a near unanimous vote, rejecting the Fourteenth Amendment. The Fourteenth Amendment, "guaranteed to Negroes civil rights and the vote, disqualified ex-Confederates who had formerly held federal office, and forbade the states to pay Confederate war debts."[114] William Bragg summarize the next chain of events in his article, *Reconstruction in Georgia:*

> The negative report of the joint legislative committee argued that if Georgia was not a state, its legislature had no role in ratifying amendments, and that if Georgia was a state, the amendment had not been placed before it constitutionally. After its Christmas adjournment, this assembly never reconvened, and in March 1867 the First Reconstruction Act passed Congress. Georgia, together with Alabama and Florida, became part of the Third Military District, supervised by General John Pope. [115]

As a result of two Reconstruction Acts, the south was now divided into five military districts.[116] The Columbus reaction to martial law and the actions of the Radical Republican Congress was staunchly southern. One of Columbus's newspapers that daily ran a column called, *Radical Truth!* exclaimed, "The war of swords against the south on part of Radicals of the North, is converted into a war of lies….Owing to the unjust and outrageous legislation of a fanatical Congress, the Press alone has been left to defend and protect popular liberty and personal rights."[117]

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[114] Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 715.

[115] William Harris Bragg. "Reconstruction in Georgia." *New Georgia Encyclopedia,* October 21, 2005. http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/reconstruction-georgia.

[116] There were two Reconstruction Acts Both were passed in 1867 but one was in March and the other in July.

Before October 1867, 93,467 African Americans were registered to vote in Georgia. By March 1868, under the backdrop of US President Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial, 169 convention delegates in Atlanta, including 37 blacks, had created a new state constitution that met the demands of the First Reconstruction Act, including a provision for black voting. It was also at this time that the capital was moved from Milledgeville to Atlanta.[118] This convention was described as:

> …a new and odious body to the people. The old leaders were nearly unanimously disfranchised. Here was an organization, incarnating the idea of force and conquest, based upon negro supremacy and white disfranchisement, and with fully one sixth of its number colored delegates, in sudden shock of every prejudice and conviction and thus a fresh set of obscure men hoisted by abhorred means to the leadership of the State. It was a spectacle that intensified the thrilling bitterness of the time.[119]

George W. Ashburn was one of the delegates at the convention. One would be unlikely to find someone with a more complicated past than Ashburn. He had formerly been known as a cruel overseer of enslaved blacks that moved from plantation to plantation. Opposed to the succession of Georgia, he joined the Union army and eventually earned a commission as a colonel. In the post-Civil War period, Ashburn had become a politician.[120] As an outspoken member of the convention and a strong Reconstructionist, he vehemently rejected a resolution passed by the convention on January 21, which asked that persons who had been active in the Civil War to be allowed to serve in public office if they regretted their actions and were willing to work for the reunion of the state on the basis of the Reconstruction Acts. In his response,

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[117] Untitled, *Columbus Daily Sun*, January 8, 1868.

[118] William H. Bragg, "Reconstruction in Georgia," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. 19 October 2016. http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/reconstruction-georgia.

[119] Elizabeth Otto Daniel, "The Ashburn Murder Case in Reconstruction Georgia, 1868," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 59 no. 3 (Fall 1975): 298. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40580188.

[120] Bragg, "Reconstruction in Georgia."

Ashburn said, "It is the solemn duty of the Nation to prevent that strife ever again being transmitted to the field of battle, to deluge the land in blood and clothe its homes in mourning and woe. To prevent this, it must keep from place and power those who still hold to the pernicious ideas which brought on the war. For this purpose, the Test Oath is an effective instrument…"[121]

George Ashburn was considered a scalawag by whites in Columbus. Scalawags were southern-born white Republicans or, by a broader definition, any white Republicans who had lived in the South before the war.[122] Ashburn was the type of Republican conservative whites in Columbus hated. He had fought for the Union army, he was great at organizing, and he had gained a formidable African American following in Columbus. Ashburn, in like manner as the Claflin teachers, rented a room in a house in Columbus-owned by an African American. It was also broadcasted that Ashburn was in a relationship with a married African American woman.[123] Some of these things could be the reason that the same week the Ku Klux Klan arrived in Columbus in 1868, a poster of a coffin bearing the name "George Ashburn" was attached to the door of a local republican.[124]

Ashburn was running for the U.S. Senate. White conservatives viewed Ashburn as a negro sympathizer and feared that his candidacy would lead to more concessions for freedmen. If African Americans in Columbus became more confident and active in politics, it could mean trouble for conservatives trying to suppress black advancement. Conservatives also thought

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[121] Daniel, "The Ashburn Murder Case," 299.

[122] Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1971), 76.

[123] Trelease, *White Terror,* 77.

[124] Ibid., 76.

Ashburn could give momentum to an already organized Radical Republican effort. The last thing conservatives desired was to have the state fall under the control of carpetbaggers, scalawags, and blacks. Preceding the election rumors began to circulate about the presence of the Klu Klux Klan to police scalawags and any supporters. To some conservatives, the Klan could be used to intimidate voters. If they were going to win the election, conservatives would have to drastically increase the number of conservative voters and decrease the number of Radicals at the polls.

On March 30, 1868, Ashburn spoke to a large crowd of African Americans at the Columbus courthouse. This would be Ashburn's last speech. Between twelve and one o'clock on March 31, Ashburn was gunned down in his residence. [125]The *New York Times* produced a reprint of the original report of the murder taken from the *Columbus Enquirer*. What may have been a hidden incident in a West Georgia community was now a national incident. The report said that men went to both entrances of the house and tried to break in. Witnesses said as many as forty men, well-dressed, wearing suits, entered Ashburn's room and began shooting. Ashburn died of multiple gunshot wounds including one to the head.[126] If the aim of this killing was political in nature, then it succeeded. Ashburn, a senate hopeful, was murdered the night before the convention to nominate candidates for the Thirty-Sixth Senatorial District was held.[127]

There are lingering uncertainties about the murder of George Ashburn. Was the Klu Klux Klan responsible for this attack? Was the infamous poster of the coffin with Ashburn's name on it an indication that the Ku Klux Klan carried out the murder? There are some similarities between Ashburn's murder and other Klan incidents. What is certain, Ashburn's murder intimidated Columbus's African American citizens. African American eyewitnesses to

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[125] Ibid, 76.

[126] Untitled, *New York Times*, March 30, 1868, p.2.

[127] Daniel, "The Ashburn Murder Case," 300.

Ashburn's murder later recanted their testimonies as if they could not recall the events. The blacks in the city that became faithful followers of Ashburn did not protest his death nor did they react violently as they professed, they would. With Ashburn's death, African Americans in Columbus had lost their biggest supporter and advocate. What conservatives could not do at the polls they did by way of the bullet. The threat of violence suppressed many of the city's new black voters.

Columbus also became unraveled because of the news of a new Civil Rights Bill. In a May 31, 1874 letter to Crocker, Alfred outlined the unrest in Columbus, fearing the impending passage of the 1875 Civil Rights Bill that would require public schools be established for both white and black races.[128] "There is a grand stir here now in regard to schools," Alfred reported, "consequently on the probable passage of the late Civil Rights Bill and Rueben told me yesterday he had just had a long conversation with Mr. Dews who told him that if the colored people attempted to intrude on their school a stop would at once be put to it."[129] The "grand stir" Alfred referred to was discussed in an article in a Columbus newspaper titled, *Insolence of Some Colored People*:

> Reports come from several sources that on yesterday morning several colored people went to Prof. Dews, the Superintendent of our Public Schools, and demanded to be admitted to the female department. They were sent away in a hurry: The Civil Rights bill has not passed yet. These negroes were ahead of the music. We do not believe this action was countenanced by any of our respectable colored people. The school-houses in Columbus are still held as private property, and no colored people will ever be admitted there. The city supports a school for them.[130]

[128] This bill was first introduced by Radical Republican Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts as the Civil Rights Act in 1870 as an amendment to a general amnesty bill for former Confederates.

[129] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 31 May 1874, Box 1 Folder 8, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f08#12.

[130] This article titled "The Insolence of Some Colored People" is an article clipped from an unnamed newspaper, assumed to be from Columbus because of the nature of the content, and glued to a page in the

White citizens in Columbus understood the bill to be an attempt at racially integrating the schools. Dews was undeniably unsettled by the ideal of school integration, but if the school board's plan went forward as devised, white Columbus citizens would not have worry about an integrated public school. Dews would execute the next step of the school board's plan by asking Alfred's former pupil and Claflin's only black schoolteacher, Reuben Matthews, to be the principal of a black public school. The idea was to divide the power base at Claflin. Blacks in Columbus paid tuition at Claflin as well as raised money in their churches to purchase coal, supplies, and keep the school afloat. Black students were used to assist the remaining illiterate black adults at the polls. To African Americans in Columbus, Claflin had become a symbol of hope. Not only were African Americans educated at Claflin, the school was becoming the center for training new black leaders. If Dews and the school board could lure away Claflin's rising star they could possibly stop Claflin's momentum. Additionally, if Reuben Matthews were employed by the school board, he would be under Dews' control. This would be a win-win situation for Dews and the school board. When Alfred learned of Matthew's appointment, she was initially excited. She felt that his training and skills would greatly benefit the black public-school students:

> Reuben takes charge the first of July tomorrow, of the Colored Public School of this city! Mr. Dews says (he) can take it for the remaining month of the years and if he sustains his reputation and they continue the school he is to take charge of it next year….I was very much grateful to know the place was offered to him and I am confident he will prove a faithful teacher, and an interested one determined to succeed; If he is permitted to work in

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Daily Record of the New England Freedmen Aid Society. The Daily Record page is dated June 10, 1874. On this page in the Daily Record, the May 31, 1874 letter from Caroline Alfred to Lucreitia Crocker has been transcribed. Box 2, Folder 3, Vol. 5, Volumes, 1862-1876, Daily Record 1873-1874, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b2-f03#12.

> his own way and make the changes he thinks is necessary. I am sure he will bring it up thee school to the place which it should hold.[131]

But her excitement was short-lived when Matthews described the pitiful conditions of the black public school. "The school R. (Reuben) says is in a very bad condition—judging from a visit he made there, and he considers the ass. (associate) teachers utterly unfit for their places. He says, no one of them Mr. K. (Ketchem) told him had progressed beyond long division in arithmetic!!"[132] After Matthews' visit and a meeting with his colleague, Alford Ketchem, the resigning black principal, it was apparent to Matthews that the inadequacy of the black public school was by grand design.[133] When Dews staffed the school, he placed the eighth grade summer grammar course graduates in classrooms ranging from forty to as many as sixty students.[134] Matthews realized that the superintendent and the school board concocted a plan to keep any African American educated in Columbus, subordinate to a white person. First the school board would encourage black families to send their children to segregated black public schools. The black public schools, placed in slums, would also be staffed by barely qualified black teachers. For Columbus's white conservatives, the practice of unqualified black teachers teaching black students became more tolerable than allowing instruction by well-educated

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[131] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 31 May 1874, Box 1, Folder 8, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f08#13

[132] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 31 May 1874, Box 1, Folder 8, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f08#14. Alfred appears to write this letter in a code of sorts, fearing the possibility of being intercepted. She uses "R" instead of Reuben and "K" instead of Ketchum.

[133] R.H. Matthews to Ednah Dow Cheney, 8 February 1873, *Freedmen's Record (Freedmen's Journal)*, 10 (April 1873): 139-140 as cited in Huntzinger, "The Birth of Southern Public Education," 120. In a February letter, Reuben Matthews disclosed to Ednah Cheney that not only did he know Alford J. Ketchum but that Ketchum was a "young man of rare ability, [who] will do credit to himself for the great work he is now laboring in for his race."

[134] Huntzinger, "The Birth of Southern Public Education," 120.

northern missionary teachers and Claflin's newly trained black teachers. Historian Jacqueline Jones concluded that "Respect for 'double-headed niggers' persisted after slavery, and literate freed people who began their own schools immediately after the war often found it easier to gain their neighbors' loyalty than outsiders could….There seemed to be a feeling of distrust toward all white people, teachers being no exception."[135] This feeling of distrust of all whites played right into the hands of the Columbus school board. Columbus blacks would more readily attend a free public school taught by fellow blacks than to take their chances with white, northern missionary teachers who they mistrusted and were likely to leave. [136]

The new public schools were in downtrodden neighborhoods and the facilities lacked proper restroom facilities. The Columbus school board purchased the old Methodist Colored Church on the corner of Mercer Street and St. Clair for $800.[137] "In fact, the colored public school as at present conducted is a disgrace, and an outrage on decency," Alfred wrote. "There is no outhouse, and it is located in a most disgraceful neighborhood….You will see what a spur the 'color line' has been and what a thorn in the flesh it still is."[138] Alfred relayed what she felt was a

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[135] Jacqueline Jones makes the case for both southern Whites and southern Blacks being suspicious of the northern missionary teachers. Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 65.

[136] The New England Freemen's Aid Society "Schools and Teachers" records show that the Claflin teacher roster changed yearly with the only constants being Caroline Alfred, Anna Holmes and the newly hired African American Reuben Matthews. Box 3, Folder 4, Vol. 9, Volumes 1862-1876, Schools and Teachers, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society; http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b3-v09#31; http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b3-v09#40; http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b3-v09#47; http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b3-v09#52; http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b3-v09#55; http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b3-v09#58.

[137] Huntzinger, "The Birth of Southern Public Education," 120.

blatant attempt by Dews and the school board to undermine African American progress. The tandem of Dews and the school board had opened black public schools in the worst of neighborhoods and in buildings of poor quality. White public-school buildings were undoubtedly better. The black public school would have free tuition and books unlike the Claflin School. Impoverished blacks would certainly soon leave Claflin and enroll in the totally free, black public school. The black public school had black teachers and a new black principal. It was not a coincidence that the new black principal was the only black teacher at Claflin. If blacks attended Claflin because of the presence of Reuben Matthews, now they could obtain his services for free. Blacks that were leery of the white northern missionary teachers now had options. When Matthews stepped into his new job he soon learned that his first impressions were precisely what he and Alfred feared. Alfred reported to Lucretia Crocker in an undated 1874 letter, "He found it in a wretched condition. You can judge how it was, for his pupils told him they did not know where their lesson in Geography and Arithmetic were, for it was so long since they had recited."[139] Matthews had been handed the reins of school with a staff incapable of performing the task at hand. Just as Dews and the school board had calculated, Claflin's students began to flock to the Colored Public School because it was tuition free. The expenses of operating the Claflin School, without local black or white support, mounted. Alfred's school was left in dire straits. In a March 19, 1876 letter, Alfred admitted to Ednah Cheney that many of her remaining Claflin students had not paid tuition or book fees in two years. "We could not urge children to buy books when we knew, week in and week out they had nothing to eat but

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[138] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 26 April 1874, Box 1, Folder 7, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f07#21.

[139] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 1874 undated, Box 1, Folder 11, Loose Papers 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f11#3.

cornbread and often not half of that."[140] Alfred's students had very few resources and when the winter arrived, many families in the rural areas had no more than just sweet potatoes and cornbread to eat.

The nail in Claflin's coffin was violence. African Americans were killed in high numbers in Columbus. But what stoked the fears of the missionary teachers was the increase of vigilante group violence. Alfred had begun to communicate in letters that she had not gotten a good night sleep because of riots or the fear of them occurring.[141] Alfred said, "An offshoot of the Ku Klux calling themselves the Black Horses" had been attempting to break their leaders John Bagley out of jail.[142] Alfred was describing John Bagley had seven grown sons that were also members of the Black Horses.[143] Bagley was in jail for killing a man.[144] Alfred recalled how one night, thirty-two of the Black Horses members came riding down Broad Street cursing and firing revolvers.[145] They had previously, publicly put out a hit list that included the Columbus mayor and the editor of the *Columbus Enquirer* newspaper. Now they demanded the release of "Captain Bagley" from jail.[146] Alfred said it was so chaotic that the military had to be called in.[147] She said that

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[140] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Cheney, 19 March 1876, Box 1, Folder 17, Loose Papers, 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f17#13.

[141] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Cheney, 3 January 1875, Box 1, Folder 12, Loose Papers, 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f12.

[142] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Cheney, 3 January 1875. Here the word "offshoot" is referring to the "Dark Horses" as a vigilante group that had its roots in the Klu Klux Klan, or the "Ku Klux" as sometimes called, and later broke into a separate group with the same aims, practices, and methods.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

incidents like these and others never made the newspapers but kept her and the remaining teachers living in fear that they could be next. Alfred and others were still harassed in public and their mail, was often delayed by months, increasing Alfred's fears that her mail was being intercepted. Soon Claflin became severely understaffed. Claflin had experienced high turnover through the years but now the flight of missionary teachers put Claflin in a perplexing position. Some of Claflin's brightest former students like William Spencer, who would go on to be a pioneer in Black education and even have a school named after him, would move on from teaching Claflin, just like Reuben Matthews to schools other than Claflin.[148] Anna Holmes, who had previously left Claflin, returned to help out but soon again retreated north. The threat of violence began to be more than just postal delays, cold stares, and alienation. In a July 6, 1876 letter to Cheney, Alfred recollected an attempt on Anna Holmes' life:

> I presume you have seen Miss Holmes and that she has told you of her narrow escape from being shot. Though we tried to make light of it, it was very nearly a serous affair and now that I am safely at home, I am willing to own I was thoroughly frightened and my heart beats quickly…It is of no consequence such only increases one's contempt for the people, if that is possible.[149]

The New England Freedmen's Aid Society decided that their teachers' lives were too high a price to pay. They withdrew from Claflin and closed the school. The chapter of Caroline Alfred and Claflin's missionary teachers had come to an end. On 6 July 1876, Alfred commented on her tenure in Columbus. "In truth, [the black schools were] a sham. The teachers are unfitted for

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[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, & Blues: A History of Columbus, Georgia,* 50.

[149] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Cheney, 6 July 1876, Box 1, Folder 18, Loose Papers, 1973-1879, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f18.

their work and the appointment in every way was miserable." "There are quite a number of our former pupils," she observed, "who are well qualified but they cannot obtain situations in Columbus." She predicted "now that our school has withdrawn, they will sink into utter nothingness."[150]

[150] Ibid.

# EPILOGUE
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The Columbus school board accomplished its goal of opening black public schools but without Reuben Matthews. With financial help from a northern friend, Matthews continued his education at Hampton Institute.[151] After graduating Matthews wrote Alfred informing her that he planned to stay in Virginia and teach. This meant that in a period of just ten years, the beacon of emancipation seemed to look more bleak than bright. For within ten years, several of Columbus's most promising sons, including Philip Monroe, Alford Ketchum, and Reuben Matthews ended their toil in Columbus and set sail to other places. The fact that Matthews, left Columbus before Alfred presents a question: Did the education Matthews received at Claflin turn him against city as white Columbus citizens feared it would or did Matthews have another reason? For the answer, the letters of Alfred once again speak:

> Reuben complains bitterly of the incompetency of the assistants, but says he can do nothing in the way of change and I think has come to Henry Hudson's conclusion: "These white people do not want us to learn any thing and they know it is only you Yankees who will teach us any thing with knowing. So they mean to drive you out."[152]

Had Matthews left Columbus because he felt he would never achieve his goals there? Did Ketchum resign and move on because he felt he had reached the limit of what he could do? In retrospect, did Henry McNeal Turner, Lynch Lamar and others unnamed do more in obscurity than Ketchum and Matthews did openly, or perhaps would blacks in Columbus fared better without the help of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and their missionary teachers?

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[151] Caroline Alfred to Lucretia Crocker, 14 September 1875, Box 1, Folder 18, Loose Papers, 1873-1878, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/digitized/fa0423/b1-f15#4.

[152] Caroline Alfred to Ednah Cheney, 28 February 1875, Box 1, Folder 12, Loose Papers, 1973-1879, New England Freedmen's Aid Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society.

While the outcomes of these questions cannot be weighed accurately due to the contingency that surrounds them, we can assess the genesis. That is—African Americans in Columbus endeavored to create a stable education apparatus for themselves after the end of the Civil War. These newly emancipated blacks were aided for a brief period by northern women and men who journeyed from New England. African Americans in Columbus were not naïve to the local challenges that opposed them but envisioned education, no matter the cost, as the only surety contributing to their advancement. When northern missionary groups arrived in Columbus, black people, both previously free and newly freed, had already created small networks, organizations, and societies that were effective in raising the funds to finance education as well as producing literate African Americans. But the plans for advancing the social mobility of blacks in Columbus were sabotaged by white Columbus citizens who felt the secret efforts of African Americans had already started creating a momentum that, if not stopped, would soon be uncontrollable. For this reason, a white Methodist minister in Columbus said, "We are willing…that the niggers should be taught to read, and that is enough. They know too much already."[153]

[153] Harrison Leland to Ednah Dow Cheney, 8 February1868, in Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal), March 1, 1868.

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